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MARGARET FULLER AND GOETHE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A REMARKABLE PERSONALITY, HER RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY, AND HER RELATION TO EMERSON, J. F. CLARKE AND TRANSCENDENTALISM

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PREFACE

Just a century ago, in 1810, was born one of America's most remarkable women, if not the most remarkable one, Margaret Fuller. This book therefore comes as a centenary tribute to her memory.

Several writers and critics, among them Edward Everett Hale and T. W. Higginson, have tried to account for the very strange fact that Margaret Fuller is not better known generally to the students and readers of American literature. That she deserves a much more honorable place in the history of the development of our thought and literature than the rather humble one which has thus far been assigned to her, has been felt by all who have studied her interesting career and become acquainted with her extraordinary intellect and activities. In fact, it is difficult to understand the whole creative period of our literature without taking into account her significant rôle in the whole movement, and the powerful influence she exerted upon our greatest American

thinkers and most noted literary men of that important period. It is the hope of the short introductory chapter of the present work to bring to light, in a somewhat concise treatment, her true relation to some of these great men and to the period in which she lived and acted.

The chief aim of the present work, nevertheless, is to trace the inner development of the powerful personality of this interesting woman, and to search out the sources of her growth and the foundation for her religious convictions and her conceptions of life. What influence she exerted among her countrymen in disseminating the convictions to which she held and how she interpreted and defended their author, Goethe, also deserves attention. Some space is therefore given to this phase of the subject.

The author wishes to express his gratitude and indebtedness to Professor Julius Goebel, the head of the Department of German in the University of Illinois. It was upon his recommendation and with the help of his valuable suggestions that this work was undertaken and written. To Professor Stuart P. Sherman, of the Department of English in the University of Illinois, who read the present work in its original draft, and offered

many valuable criticisms, the writer desires to express his most hearty thanks. The writer also desires to thank Professor John A. Walz, Chairman of the Department of Germanic Language and Literature at Harvard University, for. his kindly interest in the author during the years he spent at Harvard, and for the suggestions offered in the prosecution of this work. The writer furthermore owes his thanks to Dr. Frederick W. C. Lieder, Instructor in German in Harvard University, for his friendly assistance in securing some of the books necessary for this study. Gratitude is also expressed for the assistance given the writer by Miss Edith D. Fuller, the niece of Margaret Fuller; and also for the courtesies of the authorities of the Boston Public Library, Messrs. Whitney and Wheeler, especially, who permitted the writer to read the entire collection of the Margaret Fuller manuscripts deposited in the Boston Public Library, and to make copious extracts from them. The writer is also indebted to the various publishers who own the copyrights to works from which he has quoted. The references to these works are always given in the footnotes.

F. A. B.

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NOTE

The titles of the following works referred to in the footnotes are abbreviated thus:

Memoirs: Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli, by Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Henry Channing, and James Freeman Clarke.

Margaret Fuller MSS.: Manuscript letters and papers of Margaret Fuller in the Boston Public Library.

Expressions in parentheses are from the author quoted; those in brackets are made by the writer.

MARGARET FULLER AND GOETHE

AN INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER

One of the most interesting and influential characters in the history of American literature is Margaret Fuller. She was a leader in the great movement which during the fourth and fifth decades of the last century freed American Literature from a mere slavish imitation of European—chiefly English—models, and established it on a firm basis in our own country. The company of young writers who inaugurated this movement insisted that our poets and writers should take American themes and give them an original treatment, local coloring, and an American setting. Moreover, like Goethe and Schiller, Margaret Fuller as leader of this same group of thinkers, insisted with them that poetry should have its foundations deep in personal experience, in life itself—that it should flow from the human heart, and not be a mere product of the intellect.[1] Finally, she did, in all

[1] *Art, Literature and the Drama,* p. 306.

probability, more than any other writer or critic to bring the Americans to a fair appreciation and estimation of the rich literature of Germany, especially that of Goethe, who, as Emerson has well said, is "the pivotal mind in modern literature, for all before him are ancients, and all who have read him are moderns."[1]

The history of her influence coincides with the history of her personal development, which it will be the purpose of the following chapters to develop. First to be considered is her early Puritan education, with its one-sidedness, and its moral and religious rigorism, developing the intellect alone, and neglecting altogether the education of the heart, the truly human side of character. It will be shown how she rebelled against the Puritan church dogma, which seemed to have nothing in common with her inner life, and how she longed for a harmonious development of her whole being and nature, intellectual and emotional, through a full experience in life. We shall see how she found in Goethe, "the great apostle of individual culture,"[2] as she calls him, the means for such a development as she wished; how her nature, her soul expanded and she grew to be the strong per-

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 242.
[2] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 124.

sonality she was. It will be shown how she accepted and lived out, to a very large extent, Goethe's religious and philosophical doctrines of life; how she interpreted Goethe and his works and defended him against the severe criticism and prejudices of many of her countrymen; and finally, how she wielded a powerful influence in favor of a general study of German among the cultured of New England, and through them among the educated over the whole country.

MARGARET FULLER'S PLACE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Margaret Fuller's influence and strong personality were probably felt for the first time in connection with a club which had for one of its chief aims the liberation and deepening of American literature. This literary club had its beginning probably as early as 1833, and comprised finally in its membership the entire knot of original young thinkers then in New England. It contained on its list such names as Emerson, F. H. Hedge, George Ripley, Alcott, Theodore Parker, W. H. Channing, J. F. Clarke, Elizabeth P. Peabody, and

later Thoreau.[1] The club was called by various names, none of which, on account of the diversity of the views of its members, seemed exactly to fit. It was called "The Transcendental Club," "The Symposium Club," and occasionally "The Hedge Club," because the dates of its monthly meetings were arranged to suit Dr. Hedge's visits to Boston from his home in Bangor, Maine.

That Margaret Fuller was an active member of the club from the very beginning, and a recognized leader and guiding spirit, is the testimony of all her biographers. She, too, was the leader in the famous Boston "Conversations," and later became editor of the *Dial,* the organ and mouthpiece of the whole "storm and stress" movement in American thought and literature. Mr. Higginson writes in his biography of her: "Apart from every word she ever wrote, Margaret Fuller will always be an important figure in American history, for this plain reason: that she was the organizer and executive force of the first thoroughly American literary enterprise [*The Dial*]." So important is this magazine that we must go to it to determine the real weight of this whole

[1] For a more comprehensive description of this club see Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* pp. 130 ff.

literary and philosophical movement. It is the only authentic record. "To know what Emerson individually was," continues Mr. Higginson, "we can go to his books; it is the same with Parker, Thoreau, Alcott. But what it was that united these diverse elements, what was their central spirit, what their collective strength or weakness, their maximum and minimum, their high and low water mark, this must be sought in the 'Dial'. That was the alembic within which they were all distilled, and the priestess who superintended this intellectual chemic process. . . . Margaret Fuller." [1] Professor Trent in his *American Literature* says of the *Dial:* "Most important of all it gave a new impetus and in some ways a new direction to literary energy, especially in New England." [2] *

Concerning the quality of Margaret Fuller's writing and her power as a critic, Mr. Higginson says: "First she excelled in 'lyric glimpses', or

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* p. 130.
[2] Trent, *American Literature,* p. 318.

* In what a noble and true spirit of patriotism she accomplished this great service for the literature of our country, and with what a sacrifice to herself, may be seen when we consider that she was promised for editing the *Dial,* only two hundred dollars a year, which were probably never paid her; since the other expenses of the magazine were about equal to the income from subscriptions. Still she writes in a letter: "It is for dear New England that I want this review."—*Memoirs,* II. 26.

the power of putting a high thought into a sentence. . . . She seems to me to have been, in the second place, the best literary critic whom America has yet seen".[1] A. Bronson Alcott writes of her in 1839: "She has a deeper insight into character than any of her contemporaries, and will enrich our literature." [2]

Horace Greeley's estimation of Margaret Fuller was that she was "one whom impartial judgment must pronounce the most capable and noteworthy American woman the world has yet known;" and of her works: "I believe the writings of no other woman were ever so uniformly worthy of study and preservation." [3]

If Margaret Fuller were considered only from the standpoint of the great influence she exerted upon the lives of our greatest American authors and thinkers, that alone ought to insure her a high place in the history of American thought and letters.

James Freeman Clarke, the great Unitarian preacher and writer, says of her: "The difficulty which we all feel in describing our past intercourse and friendship with Margaret Fuller, is, that the

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* pp. 288, 290.
[2] Ibid., p. 148.
[3] Introduction to *Papers on Literature and Art,* pp. 1 f.

intercourse was so intimate, and the friendship so personal, that it is like making a confession to the public of our most interior selves. For this noble person, by her keen insight and her generous interest, entered into the depth of every soul with which she stood in any real relation. To print one of her letters, is like giving an extract from our own private journal." [1] The same author bears witness to Margaret Fuller's great power in bringing out that which was best and highest in every person who came under her strong influence: "I am disposed to think, much as she excelled in general conversation, that her greatest mental efforts were made in intercourse with individuals. All her friends will unite in the testimony, that whatever they may have known of wit and eloquence in others, they have never seen one who, like her, by the conversation of an hour or two, could not merely entertain and inform, but make an epoch in one's life. We all dated back to this or that conversation with Margaret, in which we took a complete survey of great subjects, came to some clear view of a difficult question, saw our way open before us to a higher plane of life, and were led to some definite resolution or purpose which has had

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 61.

a bearing on all our subsequent career." [1] In a letter to T. W. Higginson, thirty years later, Mr. Clarke again writes (May 15, 1883): "Margaret had so many aspects to her soul that she might furnish material for a hundred biographers, and all could not be said even then." [2]

W. H. Channing, another one of her noted biographers, bears testimony to this same ability of Margaret Fuller to enter into the most intimate and beautiful relationship with the intellectual and spiritual lives of those with whom she was associated. "I have no hope," he says, "of conveying to readers my sense of the beauty of our relation, as it lies in the past with brightness falling on it from Margaret's risen spirit. It would be like printing a chapter of auto-biography, to describe what is so grateful in memory, its influence upon one's self." [3]

The fact that a man like Emerson became one of her most enthusiastic admirers and biographers is, in itself, an unassailable proof of her high position and importance. No one speaks of her powerful influence in more unmistakable language than he as he describes her relation to him. No one

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 107.
[2] Margaret Fuller MSS. Boston Public Library.
[3] *Memoirs*, II. 9.

bears more positive proof of her high place among the thinkers and literary leaders of his time. In his masterly analysis of her mind and character, which Horace Greeley said, was "entitled to the praise of being the frankest, fairest, most effective biography of our day," [1] Emerson sounds the deepest recesses of the heart of this notable woman and seeks to discover the sources of the influence she wielded and the power that flowed from her soul.* Of her personal influence on the great minds about her, Emerson says: "She wore this circle of friends, when I first knew her, as a necklace of diamonds about her neck. They were so much to each other, that Margaret seemed to represent them all, and, to know her, was to acquire a place with them. The confidences given her were their best, and she held them to them. She was an active, inspiring companion and correspondent, and all the art, the thought, and the nobleness in New England, seemed, at that moment, related to her, and she to it."[3]

Concerning the many conversations that Mar-

[1] Introduction to *Papers on Literature and Art,* p. 1.

*It is rather strange that this biography, so much praised by Greeley, and as it seems to me, one of the best products of Emerson's mind in his great power of analyzing human character, has to my knowledge, never been republished among his collected works.

[3] *Memoirs,* I. 213.

garet Fuller held with Emerson, as after dinner they read, or walked, or rode, during the weeks she spent every year at Emerson's home, he writes: "They interested me in every manner; talent, memory, wit, stern introspection, poetic play, religion, the finest personal feeling, the aspects of the future, each followed each in full activity, and left me, I remember, enriched and sometimes astonished by the gifts of my guest. Her topics were numerous, but the cardinal points of poetry, love, and religion, were never far off. . . . She was familiar with all the field of elegant criticism in literature."[1] "The day was never long enough," Emerson writes again, "to exhaust her opulent memory; and I, who knew her intimately for ten years, from July, 1836, to August, 1846, when she sailed for Europe, never saw her without surprise at her new powers."[2]

Finally, a passage from Emerson's journal shows the weight of the influence she exercised upon this our greatest American thinker and philosopher: "I have no friend," says he, "whom I more wish to be immortal than she. An influence I cannot spare, but would always have at hand for recourse."[3]

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 217 f. [2] Ibid., I. 214 f. [3] Margaret Fuller MSS.

In 1846 on her tour through England and Scotland Margaret Fuller visited Carlyle and his wife in their home. In spite of Carlyle's impression that Margaret Fuller was sometimes narrow, which was probably due in part to the fact that she opposed him in some of his views, he saw the rare qualities of her heart and mind.[1] He wrote of her to Emerson: "Margaret is an excellent soul: in real regard with both of us here [Carlyle and his wife]. Since she went, I have been reading some of her Papers in a new Book we have got: greatly superior to all I knew before; in fact the undeniable utterances (now first undeniable to me) of a true heroic mind; altogether unique, so far as I know among the Writing Women of this generation; rare enough too, God knows, among the writing Men. She is very narrow, sometimes; but she is truly high: honor to Margaret, and more and more good-speed to her."[2]

This testimony from so many diverse sources establishes once for all, Margaret Fuller's powerful influence upon some of our greatest thinkers and our most famous literary men; it fixes the high

[1] See *At Home and Abroad,* pp. 183 ff.

[2] *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson,* 1834-1872, Boston, 1888, Vol. II., p. 155.

position she held in this, the most important movement—the creative period—in American literature.

How much credit is due to the band of young reformers, among whom Margaret Fuller was a guiding spirit, may be seen when we consider the conditions in which they found our literature and what they did to elevate it. Our literature during the third and fourth decades of the last century was still in the first stages of its making. It is true that Charles Brockden Brown, Irving, and Cooper had written a few novels and sketches of real merit; yet, on the whole, our literature was characterized, as Margaret Fuller has well said, by a "half boastful, half timid, boyish crudity." [1] It lacked real virile power and the positive national stamp. What made conditions still worse was that the few writers who possessed some talent sought their inspiration abroad and wrote in the spirit of imitation. Margaret Fuller writing in the *Dial* of this false tendency said: "Some thinkers may object to this essay, that we are about to write of that which has, as yet, no existence. For it does not follow because many books are written by persons born in America that there exists an Amer-

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 7. *Art, Literature, and the Drama*, p. 298.

ican Literature. Books which imitate or represent the thoughts and life of Europe do not constitute an American literature."[1]

Even Longfellow was among those who were of the candid opinion that our literature was to be of a conglomerate or composite nature, merely uniting within itself all the foreign elements represented in this country; nothing more. As late as 1847 he writes in his journal: "Much is said now-a-days of a national literature. Does it mean anything? Such a literature is the expression of national character. We have, or shall have, a composite one, embracing French, Spanish, Irish, English, Scotch, and German peculiarities. Whoever has within himself most of these is our truly national writer."[2] Again, somewhat earlier, (1844) he writes in a letter: "Vast forests, lakes, and prairies cannot make great poets. They are but the scenery of the play, and have much less to do with the poetic character than has been imagined."[3] It did not occur to Longfellow until much later—until he, himself, had turned his poetic talent definitely to native American themes

[1] *Art, Literature and the Drama,* p. 298.
[2] *Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.* Boston and New York, 1893. Vol. II. 73 f.
[3] Ibid, II. 19 f.

—that among new scenes, and fresh native impulses, and with a new national feeling, greater personal freedom, and broader and more liberal political views, we Americans could develop something original, as we have done, a literature distinctly characteristic of our country, differing in some respects from any and all other literatures, and corresponding to the American type of character. It is of Longfellow, as he was at this period, and of the poets who believed as he did, and wrote accordingly—"Colonists," as Margaret Fuller calls them—that she writes:

"What shall we say of the poets? The list is scanty; amazingly so, for there is nothing in the causes that could affect lyrical and narrative poetry . . . Of the myriad leaves garnished with smooth stereotyped rhymes that issue yearly from our press, you will not find, one time in a million, a little piece written from any such impulse [of the heart], or with the least sincerity or sweetness of tone. They are written for the press, in the spirit of imitation or vanity, the paltriest offspring of the human brain, for the heart disclaims, as the ear is shut against them." [1]

[1] Margaret Fuller in article on American Literature in the *Dial. Literature and Art,* Part II. 130. *Art, Literature, and the Drama,* p. 306.

Margaret Fuller here puts her finger upon the two cardinal faults of our literature of the time, especially the poetry. She lays bare the seat of the disease that kept it from growing and flowering. Our literature lacked, first of all, originality and secondly, depth. It was not an expression of the innermost feelings of the heart, as it should be, feelings that arise out of personal experiences in life.

A distinctive and most creditable feature of the criticism of Margaret Fuller and her companions is its positive, and constructive character. While these reformers could not and would not bear anything pedantic, and attacked with all their might what they thought shallow, narrow, or false in life and literature, they enthusiastically offered in its stead something better and more substantial. With what enthusiasm and high hope they carried on this reform may be seen from the following passage by Emerson in the *Dial:* "He who doubts whether this age or this country can yield any contribution to the literature of the world only betrays his own blindness of the necessity of the human soul." [1] To enable an American literature to grow up in our country, writes Margaret Ful-

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* p. 137.

ler: "an original idea must animate this nation and fresh currents of life must call into life fresh thoughts along its shores." Imitation will not suffice. We, "a mixed race . . . with ample field and verge enough to range in and leave every impulse free, and abundant opportunity to develop a genius, wide and full as our rivers, flowery, luxuriant and impassioned as our vast prairies," are ourselves able to develop a creditable and glorious literature of our own, for "Men's hearts beat, hope, and suffer always, and they must crave such means to vent them." [1] Such were the thoughts and literary ideals of this new movement in which Margaret Fuller played such an important part, ideals as grand as those which Goethe and his associates set up for German literature during the "Storm and Stress" period in Germany. Such a literature, inspired by native impulses and environments, and grown upon our own American soil, a literature which expresses feelings that spring from personal experiences in life, and that has its foundations deep in the heart, is not only national, but universal.

What the effect of these new doctrines was, and how well the originators carried out their high

[1] Article on American Literature in the *Dial.* *Art, Literature, and the Drama,* pp. 298 f. 306.

ideals, and in turn handed them down to their literary successors, is well known. "After fifty years of national life," says Mr. Higginson, "the skylark and nightingale were at last dethroned from our literature, and in the very first volume of the 'Dial' the blue-bird and wood-thrush took their place. Since then, they have held their own; . . . Americans still go to England to hear the skylark, but Englishmen also come to America to hear the bobolink."[1]

A few words ought to be said concerning the writers who criticised Margaret Fuller unjustly. Some of these criticisms are due to a misunderstanding of her true nature and the purpose she had in view, and are honest. This misunderstanding was partly because of her straight-forward and often too plain-spoken manner of address, and because of the unfavorable impression she so often made in public upon those not well acquainted with her. There are, however, several criticisms of her written out of malice and spite, assailing her at every point, not sparing even her character. Editors and authors in her time often sought to revenge themselves, by personal abuse, for some literary slight, or perhaps, for an unfav-

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, p. 137.

orable criticism of some of their works. The tomahawk theory was still in practice and men did not hesitate to "get even." This probably accounts for Edgar Allan Poe's scathing, unjust remarks concerning her, and his frequently dishonest criticisms of others who happened to provoke his ire.[1] Lowell is guilty of the same thing, though mildly so, in his *Fable for Critics,* in which he satirizes Margaret Fuller's individual characteristics in "Miranda." [2] Hawthorne, too, failed here and there, to do her justice, though he seems to have been on good terms with her generally.[3] For us it is enough to judge her by what she wrote and did, and by the verdict passed upon her by such men as Emerson, Greeley, J. F. Clarke, and W. H. Channing, men who knew her best, and who, we are sure, gave their honest, candid opinion of her.

[1] See for examples of Poe's bitter criticism and literary satire, his works (Chicago, 1896), Vol. VI. 245; IX. 259.

[2] *The Writings of James Russell Lowell.* (Riverside Edition) III. 67 ff.

[3] See Hawthorne's *American Note Books.* Entry for August 22, 1842.

MARGARET FULLER AND GOETHE

Chapter I

EARLY EDUCATION

"What I mean by the Muse is that unimpeded clearness of the intuitive powers, which a perfectly truthful adherence to every admonition of the higher instincts would bring to a finely organized human being. . . . Should these faculties have free play, I believe they will open new, deeper and purer sources of joyous inspiration than have yet refreshed the earth. Let us be wise and not impede the soul."[1] A natural development of the highest intuitive powers of the soul, by means of a full experience of life, this was Margaret Fuller's broad doctrine of education;[2] yet she, herself, never had the advantage of such a bringing up.

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 116.
[2] See *Memoirs*, I. 132 ff.

Margaret Fuller* received her early education in her home. Her father, a lawyer and politician, "a man of business, even in literature,"[1] as she characterizes him in a sketch of her youth in an autobiographical romance, was her teacher.

* Sarah Margaret Fuller, the eldest child of Timothy Fuller, was born at Cambridgeport, Massachusetts, May 23, 1810. Her girlhood days, except two years during which she attended the girls' school of the Misses Prescott at Groton, Massachusetts, were spent in and about Cambridge. At Cambridge and Boston she met and made friends with many noted men and women who remained her enthusiastic admirers through life. In 1833 the Fuller family removed to Groton. Here, besides her studies, Miss Fuller had many family cares and household duties to look after. Her father dying in 1835, increased these burdens until her health became seriously impaired. She had to give up her long cherished hope of going abroad, to help support and care for the family and contribute towards educating her brothers and sisters. During 1836-37 she taught in A. Bronson Alcott's school in Boston, and 1837-38 in the Green Street School at Providence, Rhode Island. In 1839 the Fuller family moved to Jamaica Plain, where they resided during the next three years. After that they returned to Cambridge and remained there until the home was broken up in 1844. Margaret Fuller published in 1839 a translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* which was followed in 1842 by a translation of *The Letters of Günderode and Bettine von Arnim.* During the summer of 1843 Miss Fuller took a trip on, and in the vicinity of the Great Lakes. *Summer on the Lakes,* published during the same year, is an account of her experiences and impressions on this trip. *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* came out in 1844, and *Papers on Literature and Art,* a collection of her magazine and newspaper articles previously published, in 1846. In 1852, her collected works, edited by her brother, appeared, in which the volume, *At Home and Abroad,* including a poetic translation of Goethe's *Tasso,* and much besides which had never before appeared was published. Later in 1895, and 1903, two additional works, *Margaret and Her Friends,* a synopsis of ten "Conversations" held in Boston, 1839-40, and the *Love Letters of Margaret Fuller* appeared. Her most important work, however, was as

[1] Ibid., I. 14.

He was of Puritan stock, doubtless conscientious and well-meaning in his way, a man of vigor and well-informed, since he graduated with honors from Harvard University. But he was also a man of undue self-assertion, often very impractical, and in some respects narrow. He was "a character, in its social aspect, of quite the common sort," said his daughter. His great aim of existence was to be an honored citizen, and to have a home, "to work for distinction in the community, and for the means of supporting a family."[1]

Margaret Fuller's description of her mother, also of Puritan stock, is, that she was "one of those fair and flowerlike natures, which some-

editor of the *Dial,* 1840-42, and as literary and art critic for the *New York Tribune,* 1844-46. In 1846 she sailed for Europe, and after spending some time on a visit in England and France, where she made the acquaintance of some of the most noted literary men and women then living, she took up her residence in Italy. There she met and married, in 1847, the Marquis Giovanni Angelo Ossoli, a friend of Mazzini. She became much interested in the Italian Revolution of 1848-49, and was present with her husband in Rome during the siege. While her husband fought on the walls she took charge of one of the hospitals for the wounded within the city. She also wrote during these years a History of the Italian revolution. On May 17, 1850, the Ossolis sailed on the merchant vessel, Elizabeth, for America, but the vessel was wrecked, July 19, off Fire Island, and Margaret, her husband, and child perished. The manuscripts of her last work, that on the Italian revolution, as also possibly, the notes she had taken on the Life of Goethe were lost in the wreck.

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 12.

times spring up even beside the most dusty highways of life—a creature not to be shaped into a merely useful instrument, but bound by one law with the blue sky, the dew, and the frolic birds. Of all persons whom I have known, she had in her most of the angelic—of that spontaneous love for every living thing, for man, and beast, and tree, which restores the golden age."[1] Mr. Fuller's love for her, says Margaret, "was the green spot on which he stood apart from the commonplaces of a mere bread-winning, bread-bestowing existence."[2] "She was 'timidly friendly'," says Mr. Higginson, and "must have been one of the sweetest and most self-effacing wives ever ruled by a strong-willed spouse."[3]

Margaret inherited characteristics from both her parents. Her lofty idealism, her love of the true and beautiful in character, as in nature—the tendency toward these, she inherited from her mother. Her accurate habits of mind, her great intellectuality and strong personality, but also, her lack of social tact, and a certain abruptness of manner, which so often repelled those not well acquainted with her, and caused them to heap

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 12 f.
[2] *Memoirs*, I. 12.
[3] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller.*

much unjust criticism upon her, but which really hid a kind and noble heart—all these traits she inherited, to a large extent, from her father.

Unfortunately, in some respects, for Margaret, her father took her entire education into his own hands, and from early childhood brought her up in the straight-jacket Puritan manner. Education, as he understood the term, meant merely a development of the mental faculties, "an intellectual forcing process," says Mr. Higginson. This system was the one generally adopted and practised at the time throughout New England and in most parts of the civilized world. It was thus that Margaret's bodily health, and those greater qualities of heart and character with which nature had so richly endowed her from the maternal side, were neglected, or left to develop themselves, as best they could, during these early years. Her deeper nature continually rebelled and cried out against this one-sided, mere intellectual training, the development of the mind, to the neglect of her heart and bodily health.

Margaret began the study of Latin at six years of age. Though her father thought to do well by her, and took great pleasure in instructing his oldest child himself, she says: "He was a severe

teacher, both from habits of mind and his ambition for me. . . . He had no belief in minds that listen, wait, and receive. He had no conception of the subtle and indirect motions of imagination and feeling."[1] This very important side of her nature had therefore no chance for development; "since," she says, "I must put on the fetters"; for "his influence on me was great, and opposed to the natural unfolding of my character."*

Tasks were given the child, "as many and various as the hours would allow." Since her father did not return from his office until the day was over, she had to recite to him in the evening. She was thus frequently kept up very late, because they were often interrupted. Her mind and her feelings were "kept on the stretch" late into the night, when she, or any child of her tender years, should have been in bed asleep and at rest for several hours.

"The consequence," continues Margaret Fuller,

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 15 ff.

*Arthur B. Fuller, the brother of Margaret, wrote that their father's sternness and exacting manner, as she has described it, and his overlooking, to a certain extent, the physical health of his daughter by tasking to the utmost her extraordinary powers, leaves a wrong impression of his real nature. It was, he says, through error and his great zeal for his daughter, and not through lack of love or kindness, that he caused her to suffer. Preface to *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* Boston, 1874, p. 4 f.

"was a premature development of the brain, that made me a 'youthful prodigy' by day, and by night a victim of spectral illusions, nightmare, and somnambulism, which at the time prevented the harmonious development of my bodily powers and checked my growth, while, later they induced continual headache, weakness and nervous affections, of all kinds. As these again re-acted on the brain, giving undue force to every thought and every feeling, there was finally produced a state of being both too active and too intense, which wasted my constitution." [1] "Poor child!" she writes years afterward, "Far remote in time, in thought, from that period, I look back on these glooms and terrors, wherein I was enveloped, and perceive that I had no natural childhood." [2] In 1844, in referring to the improved methods in education, physical, as also mental and spiritual, she writes in her diary: "If we had only been as well brought up in these respects! It was not mother's fault that she was ignorant of every physical law, young, untaught country girl as she was; but I can't help mourning, sometimes, that my bodily health should have been so destroyed by the ignorance of both my parents." [3]

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 15. [2] Ibid., I. 16.
[3] Diary, 1844, quoted by Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, p. 22.

It was with her books that Margaret Fuller at this period passed her days, especially Latin works, of which she must have read a great many. Besides Latin, she mentions in these early years, English grammar and Greek. The latter, however, she did not learn as thoroughly as Latin —"only enough to feel that the sounds told the same story as the mythology," [1] which charmed her very much. "Within the house," she continues, "everything was socially utilitarian; my books told of a proud world." One joy which she found, however, was the little garden near the house, of which she cannot say enough and where she came into heart-to-heart touch with nature at first hand. She felt, too, a great pleasure in viewing the sunset. Of friends, she speaks with rapture of her attachment for a cultured young English lady, who was paying a visit to America, and who seemed to Margaret to have developed within her exactly that which Margaret then unconsciously sought, namely, her inner life and soul. Outside of these two pleasures, which are suited to the temperament of an older person rather than to that of a child, her childhood seems to have been particu-

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 22.

larly barren of the many little friendships with others of her own age, and the various pleasures and pastimes in which children usually take so much delight. Writing of this period later, she says: "The common prose world [was] so present to me."[1]

It was this merely living in books and phrases that made her admire so much those Greeks and Romans of whom she studied. "I lived in those Greek forms the true faith of a refined and intense childhood," she writes. "So great was the force of reality with which these forms impressed me, that I prayed earnestly for a sign—that it would lighten in some particular region of the heavens, or that I might find a bunch of grapes in the path, when I went forth in the morning. But no sign was given, and I was left a waif stranded upon the shores of modern life." [2] Her feeling for the Romans was nothing short of ecstacy. They appeared to her to live real, positive lives, they possessed personality, were real men of flesh and blood; natural, vigorous, practical men of deeds. They had at least one side of their character developed that had been neglected in her education; and feeling this want in herself, made her

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 18. [2] Ibid., I. 21 f.

admire them and long for the qualities which distinguished them. "I thought with rapture," she writes, "of the all-accomplished man, him of many talents, wide resources, clear sight, and omnipotent will. A Cæsar seemed great enough." "Horace was a great deal to me then, and is so still. . . . He is a natural man of the world; he is what he ought to be." "It never shocks us that the Roman is self-conscious. One wants no universal truths from him, no philosophy, no creation, but only his life, his Roman life felt in every pulse, realized in every gesture." It was not long, however, until these characters seemed insufficient to her. As soon as she learned to know from the works of Shakespeare, Molière, and Cervantes characters that were better rounded out she felt that too much emphasis was laid on the external side of the Greek and Roman characters, and not enough on the internal. "I did not then know," she says, "that such men impoverish the treasury to build the palace." [1]

When Margaret was thirteen years old she was already so mature in mind and appearance that she sought her companions among girls much older than herself; yet socially she was, in general,

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 20 ff.

without success. Her father, realizing that he had made a mistake in her bringing-up, saw that she lived too much in her books, and was therefore unable to appear well in society. She had spent some time at the celebrated school of Dr. Park in Boston, but now her father decided to send her to the girls' school of the Misses Prescott at Groton. Here, according to her own account, she suffered much because of her social eccentricities and inability to mix well with the other girls of the school. She improved much in these respects, however, while here, and returned home after two years, much benefited by her experiences. Nevertheless she writes, somewhat later, concerning the faults of the educational system, as it then was, and of her teachers: "I was now in the hands of teachers, who had not, since they came on the earth, put to themselves one intelligent question as to their business here. . . . They, no doubt, injured those who accepted the husks they proffered for bread, and believed that exercise of memory was study, and to know what others knew, was the object of study." [1]

Upon her return from Groton she continued

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 132.

her studies at home after the same manner as before, developing the intellect and neglecting the other natural faculties that go to make up life and character. How industriously she worked and what subjects she covered, may be learned from a letter dated July, 1825, and addressed to one of her former teachers at Groton.

"I rise a little before five, walk an hour, and then practice on the piano, till seven, when we breakfast. Next I read French—Sismondi's Literature of the South of Europe—till eight, then two or three lectures in Brown's Philosophy. About half past nine I go to Mr. Perkins' school and study Greek till twelve, when, the school being dismissed, I recite, go home, and practice again till dinner, at two. . . . Then, when I can, I read two hours in Italian, but am often interrupted. At six, I walk, or take a drive. Before going to bed I play or sing, for half an hour or so, to make all sleepy, and, about eleven, retire to write a little while in my journal, exercises on what I have read, or a series of characteristics which I am filling up according to advice. Thus, you see, I am learning Greek, and making acquaintance with metaphysics, and French and Italian literature." [1]

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 52 f.

The next year we find her reading Madame de Staël, for whom she felt much enthusiasm, Epictetus, Milton, Racine, and the Castilian ballads. During the next two years she makes the acquaintance of Locke, and reads Madame de Staël's comments on his system. Among many other books on various subjects, she reads Russell's *Tour in Germany,* which she calls "a most interesting book."

From the accounts above we may fairly judge that she covered in her studies, up to the time she was twenty-two years old (1832), more or less thoroughly, the whole field of English, Latin, French, Spanish, and Italian literatures, besides dipping somewhat into Greek and philosophy.

Emerson however, makes a note that when she came to Concord, about 1835, she was little read in Shakespeare. This is important, for the one author who could best have developed the side of her nature so much neglected, that is, her feelings and inner life, was rather slighted. Of the good effects of her study of all these authors and this mass of literature, she writes: "They taught me to distrust all invention which is not based on a wide experience." But, she adds: "Perhaps, too, they taught me to overvalue an out-

ward experience at the expense of inward growth; but all this I did not appreciate until later."[1]

Very interesting it is to study Margaret Fuller's early religious training in her home, and the attitude she took toward the New England church of the day. Mrs. Howe describes the orthodox churchman as a "stern Presbyterian, with his dogmas and his task-work, the city circle and the college, with their niggard conceptions and unfeeling stare."[2] The church as it was then failed utterly to satisfy the wants and longings of her inner life.

Of Sunday in her home and at church, she writes: "This day was punctiliously set apart in our house. . . . The day was pleasing to me, as relieving me from the routine of tasks and recitations; . . . still the church going, where I heard nothing that had any connection with my inward life, and these rules, gave me associations with the day of empty formalities, and arbitrary restrictions; but though the forbidden book or walk always seemed more charming then, I was seldom tempted to disobey."[3]

How strictly Margaret, then but a little girl,

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 30 f. [2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller*, p. 123.
[3] *Memoirs*, I. 26.

was held to these "arbitrary rules" may be gathered from a description of her experience upon the occasion of her first acquaintance with Shakespeare. She had taken down a volume of his works, one winter Sunday afternoon, and become deeply interested in *Romeo and Juliet*. Her father, taking notice, asked what book she was reading. "Shakespeare," she answered. "Shakespeare!—that won't do; that's no book for Sunday; go put it away and take another." She put it away, but her deep interest in the characters whose acquaintance she had just made tempted her to take the book again. When asked a second time what she was reading, she answered, "Shakespeare." "How?" answered her father, angrily, "Give me the book and go directly to bed." She went, but could not sleep, because her "fancies swarmed like bees," as she devised and formed in her own mind a conclusion to the story she had begun. Soon her father came in to argue the case with her, but to no avail. She could feel no sympathy with these empty rules and formalities. The world of these plays was different; there she found a "free flow of life," which "brought home the life I seemed born to live." [1]

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 26 f.

Again, at the age of fifteen, she mentions in a letter (July, 1825), her disinclination to go to church. "Having excused myself from accompanying my honored father to church, which I always do in the afternoon, when possible, I devote to you the hours. . . etc."[1]

Perhaps the strongest statement of her revulsion against the Puritan theology and religious customs is in the following passage:

"It was Thanksgiving Day (November, 1831), and I was obliged to go to church, or exceedingly displease my father. I almost always suffered much in church from a feeling of disunion with the hearers and dissent from the preacher; but to-day, more than ever before, the services jarred upon me from their grateful and joyful tone."[2]

Much as Margaret Fuller felt at variance with the church, she sought earnestly, nevertheless, to find comfort for her inner life in the regular orthodox religion. This is shown in the continuation of the description of her experiences on this same Thanksgiving Day. Wearied out with mental conflicts and in a sad frame of mind, she sought relief and solitude by a walk into the fields. The day was cold and the sky gloomy. Suddenly

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 52. [2] Ibid., 139.

the sunshine burst through the clouds and flooded her surroundings "with that transparent sweetness, like the last smile of a dying lover." [1] A happier spirit came over her soul and made her feel herself nearer to the Divine Being, and she seemed, for the moment, reconciled. But if we read more closely this same description, we see clearly that her feeling is rather a momentary resignation of self, than one of lasting comfort and inspiration. It is a giving up of her dearest hopes, an effacing of all individuality and finding a temporary happiness in this mystic negation of soul. "I saw," she writes, "there was no self; . . . that it was only because I thought self real that I suffered; that I had only to live in the idea of the ALL and all was mine. . . . In that true ray most of the relations of earth seemed mere films, phenomena." [2]

It is very readily seen that had this negation of self been permanent, and had she remained in this frame of mind and state of feeling, beautiful as it all seemed to her then, her development would have stopped right there, and she never would have become the

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 140, 141. [2] Ibid., 140, 141.

strong, positive force, the energetic character that we know her.

This does not mean that Margaret Fuller had no deep religious instincts. That she did have, is evident from her religious Credo[1] of 1842, and from the numerous ardent prayers quoted from her letters and journal by her biographers. She, too, was as capable as anybody of enjoying a good humanitarian sermon, one that was full of thought and encouragement and that bore a real relation to her inner life. She has left on record many beautiful tributes to the preaching of such men as Emerson, Dr. W. E. Channing, W. H. Channing, and J. F. Clarke. Yet it is nevertheless true that her religious belief, as shown by her *Credo* and her private letters, was quite different from that of any of these men and from any of the contemporary New England churches. Especially is it true that she was in open dissent with the religious dogma of the church of her parents—the Puritan.

Aside from the fact that she was not orthodox, it is hard to say just what her religious belief was prior to 1832. Somewhat later, after she had studied German a year or so, she writes in answer

[1] See Appendix, p. 247 ff.

to a letter from J. F. Clarke, in which he seems to have enquired after her religious life and belief: "Very early I knew that the only object in life was to grow." She further states that though she "was often false to this knowledge, in idolatries of particular objects," [1] she had never lost sight of this aim. In a letter dated May 4, 1830, Margaret Fuller describes just how she would like to see a person of genius developed. We may take for granted that she herself at that time eagerly desired to be brought to a full realization of life and of her powers in the same way.

"I have greatly wished to see among us," she writes, "such a person of genius as the nineteenth century can afford—i. e., one who has tasted in the morning of existence the extremes of good and ill, both imaginative and real. I had imagined a person endowed by nature with that acute sense of Beauty, (i. e., Harmony or Truth), and that vast capacity of desire which give soul to love and ambition. . . . I would have had him go on steadily, feeding his mind with congenial love, hopefully confident that if he only nourished his existence into perfect life, Fate would, at fitting season, furnish an atmosphere and

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 132 f.

orbit meet for his breathing and exercise. I wished he might adore, not fever for, the bright phantoms of his mind's creation, and believe them but the shadows of external things to be met with hereafter. After this steady intellectual growth had brought his powers to manhood, so far as the ideal can do it, I wished this being might be launched into the world of realities, his heart glowing with the ardor of an immortal toward perfection, his eyes searching everywhere to behold it; I wished he might collect into one burning point those withering, palsying convictions, which, in the ordinary routine of things, so gradually pervade the soul; that he might suffer, in brief space, agonies of disappointment commensurate with his unpreparedness and confidence. And I thought, thus thrown back on the representing pictorial resources I supposed him originally to possess, with such material, and the need he must feel of using it, such a man would suddenly dilate into a form of Pride, Power, and Glory, a center, round which asking, aimless hearts might rally—a man fitted to act as interpreter to the one tale of many-languaged eyes!"[1]

It is interesting to note how she longs for just

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 69 f.

such a development of character as she finds later in the great characters of Goethe—in *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. Beyond the mere longing, however, she seems at this period not to have made any progress towards a realization of this ideal.

In concluding this chapter we find Margaret Fuller at the age of twenty-two (1832) a young woman of high sensibilities, with a lively, active mind. Her mind, however, has been developed out of all proportion to her other powers, in fact, to the neglect of these: in her own words, her "true life . . . was secluded and veiled over by a thick curtain of available intellect."[1] The orthodox church, too, has failed to satisfy her spiritual needs, in fact, has repelled her by its empty formalities, narrow dogmas, controversial sermons, and arbitrary restrictions. We see also that she has a yearning for a deeper inner experience and growth, but that her inner nature had not yet been called out.

"How little," writes Julia Ward Howe, "were the beauties of her mind, the graces of her character, guessed at or sought for by those who saw in her unlikeness to the popular or fashionable

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 18.

type of the time matter only for derisive comment!" [1]

It will be the object of the following chapter to show how she supplemented her early, very imperfect education by the teaching of her great second school-master, Goethe. We shall see with what enthusiasm she studied the "Great Sage," as she calls him, how she assimilated what she found, until it became an integral part of her nature, and thus rounded out her character and personality, until it reached its highest development and truest proportions.

[1] Howe, *Margaret Fuller*, p. 47.

Chapter II

STUDY OF GERMAN

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARGARET FULLER'S INNER LIFE

Margaret Fuller began the study of German in 1832. Her interest in this study was aroused, probably for the first time, through the works of Madame de Staël, whom she mentions in a letter as early as May, 1826. In this letter she calls her "Brilliant, . . useful too, but it is on the grand scale, on liberalizing, regenerating principles." [1] The next year she calls attention to her again. From this distinguished woman's works Margaret Fuller must have become acquainted with the Weimar circle—Goethe, Schiller, Herder, etc. In fact, Weimar is mentioned by her in a letter January, 1828.[2] She read, too, *Russell's Tour in Germany,* in which she found some interesting material about German universities. But the greatest incitement and the immediate cause

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 55. [2] Ibid., p. 56.

for her study of German were, according to J. F. Clarke, the romantic articles of Thomas Carlyle on Goethe, Schiller, and Richter, which appeared in the old *Foreign Review, The Edinburgh Review,* and later in the *Foreign Quarterly.* Both she and Mr. Clarke were attracted to this literature at the same time.

"I believe," Mr. Clarke writes, "that in about three months from the time that Margaret commenced German, she was reading with ease the masterpieces of its literature. Within the year she had read Goethe's Faust, Tasso, Iphigenie, Hermann and Dorothea, Elective Affinities, and Memoirs; Tieck's William Lovel, Prince Zerbino, and other works; Körner, Novalis, and something of Richter; all of Schiller's principal dramas, and his lyric poetry." [1]

Margaret Fuller never took any formal instruction in German, but was for the most part, except as to pronunciation, her own teacher. This is shown by the following two passages, the first from her diary of January, 1833, in which she writes: "I have now a pursuit of immediate importance: to the German language and literature I will give my undivided attention. I have made

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 114.

rapid progress for one *quite unassisted.*" [1] The second is from a letter to Emerson, December, 1842: "Italian, as well as German, I learned by myself, *unassisted,* except as to the pronunciation." [2]

Her ability to comprehend the underlying principles and meaning of each author she studied, and to see the fine distinctions between them must have been little short of marvelous. This trait is dwelt on by Mr. Clarke. "The first and most striking element in the genius of Margaret was the clear, sharp understanding, which keenly distinguished between things different, and kept every thought, opinion, person, character, in its own place, not to be confounded with any other. . . . Every writer whom she studied, as every person whom she knew, she placed in his own class, knew his relation to other writers, to the world, to life, to nature, to herself." [3]

It was fortunate for Margaret Fuller that she grew up and lived during a number of years almost within the shadow of Harvard College. Her family was socially prominent and moved in Harvard circles. Margaret enjoyed, therefore,

[1] Margaret Fuller's Diary, 1833, quoted by Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* p. 41.
[2] *Memoirs,* I. 241. [3] Ibid., I. 113.

all the privileges that came from being brought up in an intellectual atmosphere. During the period of Margaret Fuller's life with which this chapter deals, German scholarship and the study of German were arousing a great deal of interest at Harvard. Charles Follen was there, and George Ticknor and Edward Everett had just returned from Germany, where they had studied in the German universities. All were enthusiastic for German and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of German scholarship. Margaret Fuller came into close social contact with these distinguished men and German scholars, and with others who had been their pupils.

The three men of her immediate acquaintance who undoubtedly influenced Margaret Fuller most in the study of German were Charles Follen, Frederick Henry Hedge, and James Freeman Clarke. The first of these, Dr. Charles Follen, had already won a reputation as a scholar abroad, but had been compelled to flee to America as a political exile from Germany. He was a most broad-minded, public-spirited, and talented man, a man of high republican principles, and one of our first great and most enthusiastic anti-slavery advocates, a man who has as yet unfortunately not

received the general recognition due him. He taught, at this time, German, ecclesiastical history, and ethics in Harvard College. His personality as well as his celebrity as a scholar, must undoubtedly have contributed considerably to the rise of interest in German literature in Cambridge and Boston at just this time; for Mr. Higginson writes: "Every one who knew him was his friend." [1] Margaret Fuller must have met him often, for they moved in the same circles.

Of great personal assistance to Margaret Fuller was Rev. Frederick Henry Hedge, an ardent friend of the Fuller family, and a contributor to Margaret Fuller's biography. He had studied several years in Germany, and had the reputation of being "a fountain of knowledge in the way of German." [2] From him she borrowed chiefly her German books, and discussed with him by letter, and doubtless also orally, what she had read. He also, Miss Edith D. Fuller writes,[3] probably helped her somewhat with her pronunciation. "His conversation," says J. F. Clarke, "was full of interest and excitement for her. He opened to her

[1] MS. letter of Mr. Higginson to Miss Edith D. Fuller, niece to Margaret Fuller, February, 1909.
[2] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, p. 44.
[3] MS. letter of Miss Edith D. Fuller, Feb. 1909.

a whole world of thoughts and speculations which gave movement to her mind in a congenial direction." [1]

But the one who deserves most to be mentioned in this connection is James Freeman Clarke, the great Unitarian preacher, author, and anti-slavery advocate, who had studied under Dr. Follen. He had already received a degree from Harvard College, and was now a student in the theological seminary. Nevertheless he still kept up, as he did nearly all his life, a lively interest in German writers, especially Goethe, of whose influence on him Dr. Edward Everett Hale says: "But especially was he reading Goethe. And afterwards, in referring to those happy days, he would always speak with enthusiasm of the larger life which opened upon so many of them, under Goethe's lead." [2] It was probably Mr. Clarke chiefly who taught Margaret Fuller the German pronunciation, since W. H. Channing writes: that he "was her constant companion in exploring the rich gardens of German literature." [3] Mr. Clarke, himself, in speaking of this period, says: "Almost

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 90.
[2] *Autobiography, Diary, and Correspondence of James Freeman Clarke*, p. 90 f.
[3] *Memoirs*, II. 8.

every evening I saw her and heard an account of her studies." [1] "She needed a friend to whom to speak of her studies, to whom to express the ideas which were dawning and taking shape in her mind. She accepted me for this friend." [2]

Nothing could have awakened and quickened her mind, in fact, enlivened her whole being more than these her German studies. It was a period "with great intensity of the inner life," writes F. H. Hedge in the *Memoirs,* for "she read with the heart." She had "a passionate love for the beautiful, which comprehended all the kingdoms of nature and art." [3] She "framed an acquaintance with Goethe, who was destined in no small degree to influence her future life." [4] "With what eagerness did she seek for knowldge!" Mr. Clarke writes: "What fire, what exuberance, what reach, grasp, overflow of thought, shone in her conversation! . . . To me it [the association with her at this time] was a gift of the gods, an influence like no other." [5] "Her mind opened under this influence, as the apple-blossom at the end of a warm

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 114.
[2] Ibid., I. 62.
[3] Ibid., I. 93.
[4] Note by F. H. Hedge among Margaret Fuller's MSS. in Boston Public Library.
[5] *Memoirs,* I. 62.

week in May. The thought and the beauty of this rich literature equally filled her mind and fascinated her imagination."[1] "I recall other mornings [somewhat later on]", writes Mr. Clarke again, "when not having seen her for a week or two, I would walk with her for hours, beneath the lindens or in the garden, while we related to each other what we had read in our German studies. And I always left her astonished at the progress of her mind, at the amount of new thoughts she had garnered, and filled with a new sense of the worth of knowledge, and the value of life."[2] Life began to take on a different meaning for her under the vivifying influence of these new thoughts. They became, as we see, a part of her innermost soul and being. She felt a living interest in all she read. Her inner life, so long neglected, began to grow, and her personality to expand; since for her, says Mr. Clarke, "Authors and their personages were not ideal beings merely, but full of human blood and life."[3]

The amount of reading Margaret Fuller did in German, both in Cambridge, and in Groton, was simply marvelous. "I am having one of my 'in-

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 114.
[2] Ibid., 108.
[3] Ibid., 114.

tense' times," she writes from Groton, "devouring book after book. I never stop a minute, except to talk with mother."[1] But the works of the different authors did not affect her equally. Lessing's dramas she reads and thus criticizes: "Well conceived and sustained characters, interesting situations. . . . I think him easily followed; strong but not deep." [2] With Novalis she was charmed; for, in common with her associates, she had a Romantic note in her temperament. "The good Novalis," she says, "a wondrous youth," then quoting Geothe's phrase, whose "life was so full and so still."[3] His "one-sidedness, imperfection, and glow" are "refreshingly human," and "a relief, after feeling the immense superiority of Goethe." She wants to keep a Novalis journal for one of her friends, and to devote two articles in a series on German literature in a proposed literary magazine, to him and her favorite Körner, toward whom her attention was directed by Dr. Follen. Körner "charms" her, and "has become a fixed star in the heaven of my thought," she writes; "Great is my love for both of them [Novalis and Körner]."[4] Tieck seems to her so important that

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 164. [2] Ibid., 121. [3] Ibid., 118 ff.
[4] Ibid., 120, 169.

she wishes to devote to him at least eight numbers in the same proposed periodical, should it appear. Of Jean Paul Richter's "pages" she wishes to "make a book, or, as he would say, *bind me a bouquet* from his pages and wear it on my heart of hearts," to refresh her "wearied inward sense with its exquisite fragrance." "I must have improved," she concludes, "to love him as I do." [1] She translates into verse and quotes from him beautiful passages. Heine, too, and Uhland, from whom she also translates, are well known to her. She studies Buhle's and Tennemann's histories of Philosophy, and reads Fichte and Jacobi. Fichte she cannot understand. Jacobi she understands in detail, but not in system. His mind, she thinks, with marvelous intuition, is moulded by some other mind, perhaps Spinoza, with whom she feels she ought to get acquainted to know Jacobi well. Later she studies Spinoza and discusses him with Theodore Parker. Herschel, too, she studies at the advice of Professor Farrar, and "really believes" she is "a little wiser" as a result. A little later on she makes the acquaintance of Eichhorn and Jahn, and in 1836 translates for Dr. Channing, Herder and De Wette.

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 130.

Great was Margaret Fuller's admiration for the German masters of music; and her highly appreciative article on these Masters in the *Dial*[1] contributed much to stimulate the rising interest in music in New England at the time, an interest which has steadily grown in America until the present day. So heart-felt, in fact, was her admiration of the great composers that, upon returning from the Boston Academy of Music one evening, she addressed a letter to Beethoven in the spirit world. She calls him "My only friend," and writes: "Thou, oh blessed Master! dost answer all my questions, and make it my privilege to be." [2]

But for none of these authors was her admiration so strong as for Schiller. She early read all his principal dramas and his lyric poetry, and later much of his prose works. So fascinated did she become with him and the characters he created that at one time she wrote; "I don't like Goethe so well as Schiller now. I mean I am not so happy in reading him. That perfect wisdom and *merciless* nature seems cold, after those seducing pictures of forms more beautiful than truth." [3] This prefer-

[1] See *Art, Literature, and the Drama*, p. 222.
[2] *Memoirs*, I. 232 ff.
[3] Ibid., 117.

ence of Schiller to Goethe was, however, transitory, yet she mentions him many times throughout her works and in her letters, and quotes from him often.

The power, however, that truly marks this greatest epoch in the development of her inner life, the influence more powerful than all the others combined, the guiding star which shed light on her whole subsequent career and led her into a new world of thought and feeling, was Goethe. In his masterly analysis of Margaret Fuller's character and larger inner life, Emerson writes:

"Dante, Petrarca, Tasso, were her friends among the old poets,—for to Ariosto she assigned a far lower place,—Alfieri and Manzoni, among the new. But what was of still more import to her education, she had read German books, and, for the three years before I knew her, almost exclusively,—Lessing, Schiller, Richter, Tieck, Novalis, and, above all, GOETHE. It was very obvious, at the first intercourse with her, though her rich and busy mind never reproduced undigested reading, that the last writer,—food or poison,—the most powerful of all mental reagents,—the pivotal mind in modern literature, ... —that this mind had been her teacher, and, of course, the

place was filled, nor was there room for any other. She had that symptom which appears in all students of Goethe—an ill-dissembled contempt of all criticism on him which they hear from others, as if it were totally irrelevant. . . ."

"The effect on Margaret was complete," Emerson continues. "She was perfectly timed to it. She found her moods met, her topics treated, the liberty of thought she loved, the same climate of mind. Of course, this book [i.e., Goethe's works] superseded all others, for the time, and tinged deeply all her thoughts. The religion, the science, the catholicism, the worship of art, the mysticism and daemonology, and withal the clear recognition of moral distinctions as final and eternal, all charmed her; and Faust, and Tasso, and Mignon, and Makaria, and Iphigenie, became irresistible names. It was one of those agreeable historical coincidences, perhaps invariable, though not yet registered, the simultaneous appearance of a teacher and of pupils, between whom exists a strict affinity." [1]

It is clearly evident from this passage by Emerson and from other passages by Margaret Fuller herself, which are to follow, that Mr. Higginson

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 242 ff.

in his biography of Margaret Fuller greatly underestimates the influence of Goethe on her when he tries to make it appear, from a single broken passage quoted from one of her letters, that she merely looked upon Goethe as a great thinker, and not as a guide, or a friend.[1]

There are, however, other passages here and there, throughout her works, like the one quoted by Mr. Higginson, that give evidence of a reminiscence or a residue, still in her nature, of the Puritan doctrines, bequeathed to her from many generations. This part of her nature continually struggled for utterance against the broader and more comprehensive views of life taught by Goethe. Then, too, an enormous outside pressure was brought to bear on her in the same direction, since so far as spiritual teaching and the rigor of their asceticism is concerned, the Transcendentalists had much in common with their Puritan ancestors. These combined inner and outer forces in Margaret Fuller's case, therefore, were not wholly without effect. It is this that made her lean at times toward an unemotional spirituality and rig-

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* 283 ff.

* For a description of the difference in temperament between Emerson and Margaret Fuller, by Emerson himself, see *Memoirs,* I. 201 ff.

orism* like that of Emerson, which ordinarily she condemned in him. This characteristic of her nature, too, probably led her to utter the passage upon which Dr. H. C. Goddard lays so much, in fact entirely too much emphasis.[1] It is also because of this inner contention that she sometimes fails to do Goethe and his principles justice, and here and there makes contradictory statements concerning her relation to him. That this struggle lasted at least until a few years before the end of her life, is evident from her letters, her preface to the translation of Goethe's *Conversations with Eckermann;* and from the last one of her two articles on Goethe in the *Dial.*[2]

Nowhere is the evidence of this inner strife clearer than in this last-named article, nor the victory of the Goethean spirit more supreme. We can only judge that in all other cases, like this, something similar took place, i. e., there was a momentary struggle. But if we study her doctrine of character-building, her relation to her friends, her acts—in short her whole life and development —we see that, consciously or unconsciously (probably for the most part unconsciously) she was,

[1] *Studies in New England Transcendentalism,* by H. C. Goddard, p. 137.
[2] *Dial,* Vol. II, No. 1, 1841. *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 23 ff.

as Emerson correctly says, a most faithful pupil and follower of Goethe.

After true Puritan fashion she speaks at the beginning of the article in the *Dial,* just mentioned, of Goethe's intellect "too much developed in proportion to the moral nature," "Naturally of a deep mind and a shallow heart," wanting in "the sweetness of piety," and "cold, setting himself apart from his true peers, the real sovereigns of Weimar—Herder, Wieland and the others." [1] But almost immediately after her first statement she thrusts in a doubt to soften and tone it down, saying: "It is difficult to speak [thus of such men as Goethe] without seeming narrow, blind, and impertinent. . . . For . . . if you feel a want of a faculty in them, it is hard to say they have it not, lest, next moment, they puzzle you by giving you some indication of it." [2] And in a passage from a letter, written in 1836, she says the same thing of Goethe more directly: "Yet often, when suspecting that I have found a huge gap, the next turning it appears that it was but an airhole, and there is a brick all ready to stop it." [3]

Only a few passages further in the article in the

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 23 ff.
[2] Ibid, p. 24.
[3] *Memoirs,* I. 167.

Dial, when speaking of Goethe's *Tasso,* she no longer feels what she has written at the beginning and praises highly the tenderness, the "depth and fullness" which Goethe has given to Tasso's character, and his "entire abandonment to the highest nature." "But, you say," she continues, "there is no likeness between Goethe and Tasso. Never believe it; such pictures are not painted from observation merely. That deep coloring which fills them with light and life is given by dipping the brush in one's own life-blood." [1] This surely is not in harmony with her accusation that Goethe was "cold" and of a "shallow heart," or too intellectual. Three pages further Margaret Fuller praises the "wise mind of the duchess," Amalia, for giving the first impulse to Goethe's *"noble course"* at Weimar, contradicting exactly what she said of his course here at the beginning of the article.[2]

A little further on her feeling for Goethe becomes still stronger. "One is ashamed," she writes, "when finding any fault with one like Goethe, who is so great. It seems the only criticism should be to do all he omitted to do, and that none who cannot is entitled to say a word." [3]

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 28.
[2] Ibid., p. 31.
[3] Ibid., p. 45.

Just a few pages further, after defending most vigorously the *Elective Affinities,* against all the absurd and bitter criticism heaped upon it, and losing herself, heart and soul in the sweetness and purity of the character of Ottilia, she says, even before taking up such a character as Goethe's Iphigenie: "At this moment, remembering what I then [at the beginning of the article] felt, I am inclined to class all my negations just written on this paper as *stuff,* and look upon myself, for thinking them, with as much contempt as Mr. Carlyle, or Mrs. Austin, or Mrs. Jameson might do, to say nothing of the German Goetheans." [1]

At the end of the article after analyzing "Iphigenie," she calls Goethe "the brightest star in a new constellation" and closes by appealing to her readers, in Goethe's behalf: "Let us enter into his higher tendency, thank him for such angels as Iphigenie, whose simple truth mocks at all his wise 'Beschränkungen', and hope the hour when, girt about with many such, he will confess, contrary to his opinion, given in his latest days, that it *is* well worth while to live seventy years, if only to find that they are nothing in the sight of God." [2]

After reading this it would seem perfectly

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 51.
[2] Ibid., p. 60.

absurd to claim that Margaret Fuller at this period (1841) was no longer favorably inclined toward Goethe, or an enthusiastic admirer of him; or that his powerful influence was no longer exerted upon her. One who had read nothing else of hers, might be tempted to believe she simply made the statements against the great poet, in the beginning of her article, statements expressing a feeling against Goethe so common in New England at the time, in order to tear them to pieces later on and prove the contrary. Especially strong is this temptation after reading her masterly defense of Goethe in her article just preceding this one, against Wolfgang Menzel, whose criticism attacking Goethe had been translated by Professor Felton of Harvard College.

It is, however, true that Margaret Fuller did not slavishly follow and imitate Goethe. "Her rich and busy mind," in the words of Emerson, was never paralyzed in the presence of her great master, nor did she ever "reproduce undigested reading." She was too original for that, and her personality too strong. She did not cease thinking on her own part nor did she give up in any way her intellectual independence. The most beneficent influence that any great poet or thinker can

exercise upon us, is not to cause us to follow vassal-like in his train, but to stimulate, to inspire in us great and noble thoughts, to call out all the latent energies and powers of the soul, and to develop them to a greater degree of perfection and independence. This is chiefly what Goethe did for Margaret Fuller.

Goethe had above all other poets the special faculty and power to free and call out most forcibly the *ego,* the real "I." In fact nobody has ever been so powerful to develop the personality in his followers, or as he calls them, his "Gemeinde," as he. This is clearly pointed out in an extract from the lectures of Rudolph Hildebrand on Goethe's lyric poetry.[1] Theodor Creizenach lays emphasis upon this same power of the great German poet.[2] Both of these distinguished critics of Goethe, especially the first mentioned, show how Goethe *rediscovered* that which is the *real human part* in man, the mainspring of character and personality, so long lost sight of and buried underneath the heap of débris of mere intellectual knowledge, which had accumulated for ages. He

[1] *Lectures of R. Hildebrand,* published by Julius Goebel, *Goethe Jahrbuch,* Vol. XXII. 205 ff.

[2] *Goethe als Befreier,* by Theodor Creizenach. *Goethe Jahrbuch,* Vol. XXII. 131 ff.

laid stress once more upon the inner life of man, the real motive forces in the soul, that go to make up character. This force, Goethe showed, does not consist in—nor is it the result of—mere knowledge, but it is the very essence of our personality: "das Unerkannteste und Unerkennbarste, und doch Gewisseste in uns," * which he, as a poet intends to bring out and liberate. It is an appeal to the heart, to the whole inner soul of man. Here is the whole secret:—Mind and heart, will and emotions must both be called out, reconciled, and go hand in hand. Character and a harmonious personality are the result of a proper education of all these conjointly. Goethe thus may justly call himself a liberator, and say, he has freed us "from the snares of pedants." [1]

Edward Everett Hale, too, saw this mission of Goethe as a liberator of the soul from the tyranny of intellectual knowledge, for he writes concerning J. F. Clarke, and his fellow-students in the Divinity School at just this time: "These young men could not read their Coleridge or their Goethe without emancipating themselves at once from the wooden philosophy of John Locke, over

* "The least known and least knowable, and yet that within us of which we are the most certain."

[1] *Goethe's Werke.* Hempel edition, III. 267.

which they had been made to hammer as undergraduates." [1] It is especially in his lyric poetry that Goethe succeeds so well in liberating our *Ego* —in awakening our innermost feelings and developing the emotional side of character to balance the intellectual. Goethe fulfills this, his mission as a poet, as he calls it in his poem *Vermächtniss,* by leading the way in which we, as emotional beings, are to follow.

"Denn edlen Seelen *vorzufühlen*
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf."*[2]

Few persons felt his liberating influence more deeply than did Margaret Fuller. How ripe and ready she really was for the full force and effect of such an appeal, is seen from her letter quoted in the last pages of the preceding chapter of this present treatise. How remarkably Goethe's influence acted upon Margaret Fuller, how completely carried away she now was with him, and how, docile as a child, she filled her mind and heart

[1] *Autobiography, Diary, and Correspondence of James Freeman Clarke,* p. 89 f.

* "For to lead noble souls in their feeling
[literally, to feel for them beforehand, so that they might follow]
Is the most desirable of callings."

[1] *Goethe's Werke,* Hempel edition, III. 192.

with some part of the "Great Sage's" teaching every day, the following passages show most conclusively. She was practically re-educated, mind and soul. Her feelings and inner life were awakened and called out; and finally she emerged from these years of the study of "Our Master Goethe," as she confidently calls him,[1] an altered being and a strong, fully developed personality. She writes in 1832:

"It seems to me as if the mind of Goethe had embraced the universe. I have felt this lately, in reading his lyric poems. I am enchanted while I read. He comprehends every feeling I have ever had so perfectly, expresses it so beautifully; but when I shut the book, it seems as if I had lost my personal identity; all my feelings linked with such an immense variety that belong to beings I had thought so different. What can I bring? There is no answer in my mind, except 'It is so,' or 'It will be so,' or 'No doubt such and such feel so.' Yet, while my judgement becomes daily more tolerant toward others, the same attracting and repelling work is going on in my feelings. But I persevere in reading the great sage, some part of every day, hoping the time will come, when I shall

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, p. 135.

not feel so overwhelmed, and leave off this habit of wishing to grasp the whole, and be contented to learn a little every day, as becomes a pupil." [1]

In another passage, written the following year, the same longing for a further inner development, as "Nature intended," is clearly expressed. She would like to go to Goethe in her perplexity and accept him both as a wise friend and a guide.

"How often I have thought, if I could see Goethe, and tell him my state of mind, he would support and guide me! He would be able to understand; he would show me how to rule circumstances, instead of being ruled by them; and, above all, he would not have been so sure that all would be for the best, without our making an effort to act out the oracles; he would have wished to see me what Nature intended." [2]

"I constantly think of Goethe," she writes again, "while I see life overgrowing thought as soon as it has expressed it. He is the light of the age, vivid. I learn all the other men from him, him from them." [3]

In the following passage, written in 1833, in an hour of sadness while she is watching beside the

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 119.
[2] Ibid., I. 122.
[3] Margaret Fuller MSS.

sick-bed, Goethe is again the guide and solace for her soul. "When not with——, in whose room I sit, sewing, and waiting upon him, or reading aloud a great part of the day, I solace my soul with Goethe, and follow his guidance into realms of the 'Wahren, Guten, and Schönen'." [1*]

In another letter Margaret Fuller speaks of the inspiration she received from Goethe, the fresh impulse for action and for exerting her personality, in short "to live as he did."

"Three or four afternoons I have passed very happily at my beloved haunt in the wood, reading Goethe's 'second Residence in Rome'. Your pencil marks show that you have been before me. I shut the book each time with an earnest desire to live as he did—always to have some engrossing object of pursuit. I sympathize deeply with a mind in that state. While mine is being used up by ounces, I wish pailfuls might be poured into it. I am dejected and uneasy when I see no results from my daily existence, but I am suffocated and lost when I have not the bright feeling of progression." [2]

Writing of the remaining works of Goethe

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 146.
* The True, Good, and Beautiful.
[2] *Memoirs,* I. 121 f.

which she had not yet read, but was now reading,* she says: "I have with me those works of Goethe which I have not yet read, and am now engaged upon 'Kunst und Altertum,' und 'Campagne in Frankreich.' I still prefer reading Goethe to anyone else, and as I proceed find more and more to learn."[1] Three years later, though she had lost a little of her first ardor for Goethe, and had not yet entirely succeeded in sounding the depth of his philosophy of life, she is still willing to follow his lead. "I do not know our Goethe yet," she writes, "I have changed my opinion about his religious views many times;" but she is still ready "to try his philosophy, and, if needs must play the Eclectic." [2] On her birthday, 1836, when reading Goethe's *Lebensregeln,* she concludes, "I will endeavor to profit by the instruction of the great philosopher, who teaches, I think, what Christ did, to use without overvaluing the world." [3]

Her enthusiasm went even further, so far in fact, that she earnestly desired her friends to

* She read probably in all fifty-five volumes of Goethe, the number Emerson had in his library, and of which she made use at this time.

[1] Margaret Fuller MSS. in Boston Public Library; also *Memoirs,* I. 147.

[2] *Memoirs,* I. 167.

[3] Ibid., 161.

share it with her. "It is my earnest wish," she writes, "to interpret the German authors of whom I am most fond to such Americans as are ready to receive. . . . I hope a periodical may arise, by and by, which may think me worthy to furnish a series of articles on German literature, giving room enough and perfect freedom to say what I please." [1]

Her opinions of Goethe's doctrines are so well grounded five years after she had begun to study him that she writes in 1837, when seeking material for her "Life of Goethe:" "Of course, my impression of Goethe's works cannot be influenced by information I get about his life." [2] He is, and remains for her what she herself has named him: "High priest of truth, and best lover of man." [3] In the Preface to her translation of *Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe* she recognizes even a closer union and affectionately calls him *"My parent."* [4]

The following passage, written probably some years later, shows how clearly she saw the great development that had taken place in her character

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 168.
[2] Ibid., 129.
[3] *Reminiscences of Edna Dow Cheney,* p. 208.
[4] Translator's Preface to *Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe,* p. xix.

and personality, as a result of her studies and inner experiences. "I mourned," she writes, "that I never should have a thorough experience of life, never know the full riches of my being; I was proud that I was to test myself in the sternest way, that I was always to return to myself, to be my own priest, pupil, parent, child, husband, and wife. All this I did not understand as I do now; but this destiny of the thinker, and (shall I dare say it?) of the poetic priestess, ... lay yet enfolded in my mind." [1]

That this growth of her inner life under the influence of Goethe did not cease after a few years, but continued uninterruptedly is clear. As late as her editorship of the *Dial* (1840-42) she writes: "He [Goethe] obliges us to live and grow, that we may walk by his side; vainly we strive to leave him behind in some niche of the hall of our ancestors; a few steps onward and we find him again, of yet serener eye and more towering mien than on his other pedestal." [2]

From the evidence in the foregoing passages it is perfectly clear, as Emerson writes, that "Nowhere did Goethe find a braver, more intelligent,

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 99.
[2] *Life Without and Life Within*, p. 14.

or more sympathetic reader," [1] and that "the effect on Margaret was complete." This influence, too, was permanent, for Emerson writes that by the time he learned to know her well in 1836, the main problems of human life had been scanned, interrogated, and settled by her.[2] One of her greatest desires had been a development according to nature, a rounding out of her whole being. Here in her study of Goethe, as we saw, she found "her moods met," the suggestions she needed, and the opportunities she sought. A new light fell upon her soul. The result was as if new blood had rushed through her veins. Her personality developed, her character rounded out, and her mind broadened. The "infinite curiosity to know individuals" was satisfied, and as J. F. Clarke writes, she studied character, and acquired "the power of exerting profoundest influence on individual souls." [3] She was filled with a new impulse for action and a longing desire to exert her personality; to carry into execution her new ideals and plans of life. "It will be long," she writes when studying Goethe and meditating a work on his life, "before I can give a distinct, and at the same time concise account of my present state. I

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 243. [2] Ibid., I. 291. [3] Ibid., 65 f.

believe it is a great era. I am thinking now—really thinking, I believe; certainly it seems as if I had never done so before. If it does not kill me, something will come of it, never was my mind so active; and the subjects are God, the universe, immortality." [1]

The stamp and effect of her Goethe study were there to stay. Though she may later have lost a little of her first enthusiasm for the great author, she nevertheless, unconscious of his great influence, continued to develop harmoniously all her higher powers, in exactly the same manner and in the same direction in which her great second schoolmaster had taught her and put her under way. Her whole life in America, and later in Italy, was in conformity to the great principles which she had learned from Goethe.

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 128.

Chapter III

RELIGION AND PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

Nowhere was the influence of the study of Goethe upon Margaret Fuller greater than upon her religious life and doctrines. One of her great objects in life, according to her own statement, was to grow. "This aim was distinctly apprehended and steadily pursued by her from first to last," writes James Freeman Clarke. "The good and the evil which flow from this great idea of self-development she fully realized. This aim of life, originally self-chosen, was made much more clear to her mind by the study of Goethe,[1] the great master of this school, in whose unequalled eloquence this doctrine acquires an almost irresistible beauty and charm." "It was a high, noble one, this aim of self-culture," continues Mr. Clarke, "wholly religious, almost Christian. It gave dignity to her whole career, and made it

[1] How nearly this aim in her life coincides with the Goethean doctrine of the harmonious development of the personality may be further seen when we remember that exactly the same thing, which is said of her here, was also said of Goethe himself.

heroic. . . . If she ever was ambitious of knowledge and talent, as a means of excelling others, and gaining fame, position, admiration,—this vanity had passed before I knew her, and was replaced by the profound desire for a full development of her whole nature, by means of a full experience of life." [1] Not merely for her own good was this development to be; it was also to enable her better to carry out her ideals and undertakings in life, which were indeed noble and public-spirited enough. "She was religious," writes Mrs. Howe, one of Margaret Fuller's intimate friends and admirers, "in her recognition of the divine element in human experience, and Christian in her elevation above the sordid interests of life, in her devotion to the highest standards of duty and of destiny." [2]

Margaret Fuller is usually associated—especially by later writers—with the Transcendental Movement in New England and, what is stranger, is classed as one of the leaders.[3] It seems perfectly evident, however, both from her own

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 132 f.
[2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller,* p. 30.
[3] Dr. H. C. Goddard in his work, *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* (p. 8), names the leaders in this movement, among whom he places her, "because," as he writes, "*common consent* seems to have selected them [as leaders]."

statements, and the differences between the nature of the movement and her philosophical and religious belief, that she was not a Transcendentalist at all, much less a leader in the movement. This fact seems to have been clear to her from the very start. As early as 1835, in the infancy of the movement, she writes concerning the publication of the new magazine then on foot, and which later appeared as the *Dial*:—

"I shall feel myself honored if I am deemed worthy of lending a hand, albeit I fear I am merely *'Germanico,'* and not 'transcendental'." [1]

The error of placing her among the Transcendentalists seems to have been due chiefly to the mere fact that she happened to be associated, more or less closely, with the leaders of this movement, as well as to the broad, elastic, and often very vague manner in which the term "transcendental" was used. Mr. T. W. Higginson, writing, of course, from a purely literary standpoint, goes very little further in his definition of the term than, that "the Transcendental movement amounted essentially to this: that about the year 1836 a number of young people in America made the discovery that, in whatever quarter of the

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli*, p. 141.

globe they happened to be, it was possible for them to take a look at the stars for themselves," that a few "fresh thinkers," "apostles of the ideal," appeared in good earnest and speculated in philosophy and theology, that they encouraged originality and looked immediately around them for their stimulus, scenery, etc., in the literary works they produced, and that they had a powerful influence for good on American literature, generally.[1] Of course, with a definition of Transcendentalism so comprehensive as that, Margaret Fuller may easily be classed as a Transcendentalist; but other contemporary writers whom nobody connects with the Transcendental movement, among them, Edgar Allan Poe, and Washington Irving, also found their stimulus and scenery immediately about them, and seem to have been tolerably free from imitation, and quite original in their thoughts. The fact is that the term "Transcendental Movement" is more restricted in its meaning than the definition quoted above. It was a particular and tolerably well-defined philosophical and religious doctrine.

The term "transcendental," as applied to phi-

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* 133 ff.

losophy, originated, of course, with Kant. Emerson says in the third volume of the *Dial;*

"What is popularly called transcendentalism among us, is Idealism; Idealism as it appears in 1842. . . . The Idealism of the present day acquired the name of Transcendental, from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant, of Königsberg, who replied to the skeptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were intuitions of the mind itself; and he denominated them *Transcendental* forms. The extraordinary profoundness and precision of that man's thinking have given vogue to his nomenclature, in Europe and America, to that extent that whatever belongs to the class of intuitive thought is popularly called at the present day Transcendental." [1]

Kant's use of the term, as Dr. H. C. Goddard has also pointed out, was more technical and restricted than that usually applied to it by the Transcendentalists themselves. In the introduc-

[1] *Dial,* III. 297 ff. *Emerson's Works,* Vol. I. 311 ff.

tion to the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant clearly states that in Transcendental philosophy no concepts are to be admitted which contain anything empirical, and that the *a priori* knowledge must be perfectly pure. "Therefore, although the highest principles of morality and their fundamental concepts are *a priori* knowledge, they do not belong to transcendental philosophy, because the concepts of pleasure and pain, desire, inclination, free-will, etc., which are all of empirical origin must here be presupposed. Transcendental philosophy is the wisdom of pure speculative reason. Everything practical, so far as it contains motives, has reference to sentiments, and these belong to empirical sources of knowledge."[1]

With the New Englander who embraced this originally purely philosophical doctrine, it did not long remain so. With him the vital question was, what relation did this philosophy bear to religion; what was its significance to the moral world, to life itself? An article in the *Dial* by John A. Saxton entitled "Prophecy—Transcendentalism—Progress," fitly illustrates how the special significance that this doctrine bears to the idea of God, virtue, and the immortal soul was singled out.

[1] Kant, Introd. to *Critique of Pure Reason.* Transl. by F. Max Müller, Vol. II. 12 f.

"This name [Transcendentalism] as well as that of *Critical Philosophy,* was given by Kant, a German philosopher, who first decisively refuted the theory of sensation, and gave a scientific demonstration of the reality and authority of the spontaneous reason. . . . Kant, instead of attempting to prove, which he considered vain, the existence of God, virtue, and immortal soul, by inference drawn, as the *conclusion* of all philosophy, from the world of sense, found these things written, as the *beginning* of all philosophy, in obscured, but ineffaceable characters, within our inmost being, and themselves first affording any certainty and clear meaning to that very world of sense, by which we endeavor to demonstrate them. God *is,* nay alone *is;* for we cannot say with like emphasis that anything else is. This is the absolute, the primitively true, which the philosopher seeks." [1]

Soon other elements were added, some philosophical, some purely literary; then all these elements combined were grafted on to the stock of the Unitarian church. Perhaps as good and as concise a definition of New England Transcendentalism in its full development and complexity

[1] *Dial,* II. 90 f.

as can be found is given by a Transcendentalist himself, W. H. Channing:

"Transcendentalism was an assertion of the inalienable integrity of man, of the immanence of Divinity in instinct. In part, it was a reaction against Puritan Orthodoxy; in part, an effect of renewed study of the ancients, of Oriental Pantheists, of Plato and the Alexandrians, of Plutarch's Morals, Seneca and Epictetus; in part, the natural product of the culture of the place and time. On the somewhat stunted stock of Unitarianism,—whose characteristic dogma was trust in individual reason as correlative to Supreme Wisdom,—had been grafted German Idealism, as taught by the masters of most various schools, by Kant and Jacobi, Fichte and Novalis, Schelling and Hegel, Schleiermacher and De Wette, by Madame de Staël, Cousin, Coleridge, Carlyle; and the result was a vague yet exalting conception of the godlike nature of the human spirit. . . . The rise of this enthusiasm was as mysterious as that of any form of revival; and only they who were of the faith could comprehend how bright was this morning-time of a new hope! . . . Transcendentalism, as viewed by its disciples, was a pilgrimage from the idolatrous world of creeds

and rituals to the temple of the Living God in the soul. It was a putting to silence of tradition and formulas that the Sacred Oracle might be heard through intuitions of the single-eyed and pure-hearted. Amidst materialists, zealots, and skeptics, the Transcendentalist believed in perpetual inspiration, the miraculous power of will, and a birth-right to universal good." [1] It was therefore, as Mrs. Howe said, "A new church, with the joy and pain of a new evangel in its midst." [2]

Transcendentalism, however, was like Puritanism and Unitarianism before it, in that it was purely intellectual, religious and moral, with, of course, the great difference that it was infinitely more liberal and free from pure church dogmatism than the first, and on a much loftier plane than either,—since it contained the element of idealism taken over chiefly from the German. Nevertheless, there was in Transcendentalism an element of moral rigorism and hidden asceticism, the legacy of Puritanism, which looked with disdain, or at least with distrust, upon the sensual nature of man. It was this same element in Kant's philosophy which so strongly appealed to the Puritan

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 12 f. [2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller*, p. 90.

Transcendentalists. Despite their declamations about art and poetry, it never occurred to them that true art and true poetry pre-suppose an ideal of man which presents the harmonious unity of both the sensual and the spiritual side of human nature. We must consider it one of the greatest achievements of Schiller, that, feeling the defect in Kant's attitude and doctrine, he presented in his great æsthetic essays a conception of beauty, and, with it, a new ideal of man far superior to that of Kant, an ideal the embodiment of which he recognized in the genius and personality of Goethe.

The difference between the Transcendental standpoint and the æsthetic view, between mere philosophic speculation and a harmoniously developed, healthy humanity, such as Margaret Fuller believed in, cannot be expressed better than by the following extract from one of Schiller's letters to Goethe (July 9, 1796):

"Innerhalb der æsthetischen Geistesstimmung regt sich kein Bedürfniss nach jenen Trostgründen, die aus der Spekulation geschöpft werden müssen; sie hat Selbstständigkeit, Unendlichkeit in sich; nur wenn sich das Sinnliche und das Moralische im Menschen feindlich entgegenstre-

ben, muss bei der reinen Vernunft Hülfe gesucht werden. Die gesunde und schöne Natur braucht, wie Sie selbst sagen, keine Moral, kein Naturrecht, keine politische Metaphysik: Sie hätten ebensogut auch hinzusetzen können, sie braucht keine Gottheit . . . um sich zu stützen und zu halten."*[1]

There can be no doubt that, owing to traditions inherited from the Puritans the views expressed in this passage remained a closed chapter to the Transcendentalists. They never had, nor could they have, a true appreciation of æsthetic beauty in the Goethe-Schiller sense. "Religion opens her arms to him on whom beauty is lost," says Schiller. Hence the fact that the Transcendental movement, important as it was in the intellectual life of America, left no production of great poetic merit. Hence, also, a certain lack of appreciation for the poetic genius of Goethe in men like Emerson, who with this mistaken conception of spirituality, scented in Goethe the pagan. Clearly

*Within the aesthetic temperament there is no need for those consolations which must be founded upon speculative reasoning. It is independent, eternal in itself. Only when the sensual and the moral natures in man are at enmity with each other must help be sought in pure reason. Nature in her health and purity, needs, as you say, no moral, no nature laws, no politic metaphysics. You might just as well have added, it needs no divinity . . . to lean on or hold to.

[1] *Goethe-Schiller Correspondence,* Schiller to Goethe, July 9, 1796.

as he saw what Goethe was to the world of literature and thought, his admiration for him was, in his own words, a "qualified" one.[1]

Margaret Fuller, on the other hand, had imbibed too deeply from the rejuvenating fountain of Goethe's poetry and thought, to be enticed into the caves of Transcendental mysticism, or upon the frosty heights of an imagined spirituality. It was on this fundamental Goethean principle that she differed from all the Transcendentalists.

It is true that both systems aim at a high degree of perfection in human character, but the means by which they hope to arrive at the end they seek, as well as the character of their final aim, are entirely different. Transcendentalism seeks to bring man to the desired state by elevating his thoughts into a higher realm, intellectually and religiously, in short into the atmosphere of God himself, through the divine nature of his own spirit. The Transcendentalist, writes W. H. Channing, "believed in perpetual inspiration. . . . He sought to hold communion face to face with the unnameable Spirit of his spirit."[2] The other, somewhat less pretentious, sought the highest per-

[1] *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence,* Vol. I. 29 f. *Emerson's Works,* Vol. IV. notes, p. 371. See Chapter VI. 200 f.
[2] *Memoirs,* II. 13.

fection of character in the development of the truly human, through experience in life, by a full and wise exercise of the natural given powers, and by trusting, *at first hand,* in the human instincts as a divine guide for life. "There is an only guide," says Margaret Fuller, "the voice in the *Heart.* . . . Thou canst not stray from nature, nor be so perverted, but she will make thee true again;" [1] or as Goethe, her teacher, expresses the same doctrine:

"Ist nicht Kern der Natur
Menschen im Herzen?"*

Transcendentalism is by nature deeply Christian in the traditional sense. According to its teaching, and that of the churches related to it, the chief aim of man on earth should be to live a religious life. In the Goethean sense, which Margaret Fuller represented, purity and harmony of character is the chief aim. "At present, my soul is intent on this life," she writes, "and I think of religion as its rule, and, in my opinion, this is the natural and proper course from youth to age!" [2] Or as Goethe expresses himself: "Fröm-

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 211.

* "Is not the germ of nature
In the heart of man?"

[2] *Memoirs,* I. 136.

migkeit ist kein *Zweck,* sondern ein *Mittel,* um durch die reinste Gemütsruhe zur höchsten Kultur zu gelangen." *[1] The aim is to build character and to fit ourselves to live properly on *this* sphere, to develop our being, both the mortal and the immortal part, to its highest possible expression and perfection, and to be a boon to our fellow beings; and then, all this done, without any anxiety on our part, we may trust Providence to take care of our future.

> "Halte dich im Stillen rein,
> Und lass es um dich wettern;
> *Je mehr du fühlst ein Mensch zu sein*
> *Desto ähnlicher bist du den Göttern."***

To develop the human part of ourselves into the image of God, or until we, ourselves, are like the gods, this is the ultimate aim. That Goethe recognized his doctrine to be deeply religious is clear from the lines in his *Zahmen Xenien,* just quoted. The human instincts, too, are looked upon as di-

* "Piety is not an *end* but a *means,* by which to attain, through the purest tranquillity of mind, the highest culture."

[1] *Sprüche in Prosa,* No. 41.

** "Keep thyself pure in quiet,
And let it storm about thee;
The more a human (being) thou feelest thyself to be,
The more thou art like the gods."

vine, as they also are in the Transcendental doctrine, with this difference, however: that in the Goethean doctrine they are that which the individual *must ultimately* turn to for the highest laws of his inner being. In the other this is not altogether the case. In the highest degree of perfection, according to Goethe, the individual recognizes the *Divine in human nature* itself. Since God, as Goethe believed with his whole soul, dwells in Nature, he must also dwell in the heart of man; for is not man a part of nature, yea, the highest expression of Nature? "Im Innern ist ein Universum auch," *[1] he says; and Margaret Fuller prays: "O for the safe and natural way of Intuition!" "O for a more calm, more pervading faith in the divinity of my own nature!" [2] It seems that James Freeman Clarke, who was himself deeply influenced by Goethe, had the distinction between these two systems clearly in mind when he wrote of Margaret Fuller's aim of self-culture: "Wholly religious, and almost Christian, I said, was this aim. . . . It was almost Christian in its superiority to all low, worldly, vulgar thoughts

* "In the inner (soul) there is also a universe."
[1] *Goethe's Gedichte,* Hempel ed. II. 368.
[2] *Memoirs,* I. 171, 176.

and cares; in its recognition of a high standard of duty, and a great destiny for man." [1]

A letter, written probably soon after Margaret Fuller's acquaintance with Goethe, sheds still more light on her belief and philosophy of life, showing how she rejected all systems of positive religion and stuck to her idea of self-development through experience in life, "Loving or feeble natures need a positive religion, a visible refuge, a protection, as much in the passionate season of youth as in those stages nearer to the grave. But mine is not such. . . . Tangible promises! Well-defined hopes! are things of which I do not *now*, feel the need." [2] "I cannot endure," she says in another passage, "to be one of those shallow beings who can never get beyond the primer of experience,—who are ever saying,—

'Ich habe geglaubt, *nun glaub' ich erst recht,*
Und geht es auch wunderlich, geht es auch schlecht,
Ich bleibe im gläubigen Orden.' "*[3]

"When disappointed, I do not ask or wish conso-

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 133.
[2] Ibid., I. 135.
[3] Ibid., p. 82.
* "I have believed, *now I believe all the more,*
And even if things go strangely, even if they go wrong,
I will remain in the ranks of the believing."

lation,—I wish to know and feel my pain, to investigate its nature and its source; I will not have my thoughts diverted, or my feelings soothed."[1]

How near this is to what Goethe says in *Faust* (l. 1768 ff.) may be seen from the following passage:

"Mein Busen, der vom Wissensdrang geheilt ist,
Soll keinen Schmerzen künftig sich verschliessen,
Und was der ganzen Menschheit zugeteilt ist,
Will ich in meinem innern Selbst geniessen,
Mit meinem Geist das Höchst' und Tiefste greifen,
Ihr Wohl und Weh auf meinen Busen häufen,
Und so mein eigen Selbst zu ihrem Selbst erweitern,
Und wie sie selbst, am End' auch ich zerscheitern."*

Again, the following passage shows how thoroughly Goethean her doctrine really was:—"I do not see how it is possible to go further beyond the results of a limited human experience than those do who pretend to settle the origin and

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 135.

* "My bosom, of its thirst for knowledge sated,
Shall not, henceforth, from any pang be wrested,
And all of life for all mankind created
Shall be within mine inmost being tested:
The highest, lowest forms my soul shall borrow,
Shall heap upon itself their bliss and sorrow,
And thus, my own sole self to all their selves expanded,
I too, at last, shall with them all be stranded!"
—*Bayard Taylor's Translation.*

nature of sin, the final destiny of souls, and the whole plan of the Causal Spirit with regard to them. I think those who take [this] view have not examined themselves, and do not know the ground on which they stand."

"I acknowledge no limit, set up by man's opinion, as to the capacity of man. 'Care is taken,' I see it, 'that the trees grow not up into heaven'; but, to me it seems the more vigorously they aspire, the better. Only let it be a vigorous, *not a partial or sickly aspiration. Let not the tree forget its root.*" "I would beat with the living heart of the world and understand all the moods," she continues in exact accordance with the spirit of *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister,* "even the fancies and fantasies, of nature. I dare to trust to the interpreting spirit to bring me out all right at last,—establish truth through error. Whether this be the best way is of no consequence, if it be the one individual character points out. . . .

> I the truth can only know,
> Tested by life's most fiery glow.

. . . Let me stand in my age with all its waters flowing around me. If they sometimes subdue,

they must finally upbear me, for I seek the universal,—and that must be the best.

"The Spirit, no doubt, leads in every movement of my time: if I seek the *How,* I shall find it, as well as if I busied myself more with the *Why.* Whatever is, is right, if only men are steadily bent to make it so, by comprehending and fulfilling its design." [1]

A passage from Margaret Fuller's *Credo* of 1842 shows still further how much her religious belief really differed from that of her friends,—the Transcendentalists, as well as those of the older faiths,—and how clear this difference was to her.

It is true that she believed the Gospel account of Christ, and that all happened just as it is recorded; yet to her the chief significance of such a life as Christ's lay in the fact that it presented to her an illustration of the ideal truth. This much was enough for her, and seemed to satisfy her completely.[2] In her *Credo* she calls Christ "Redeemer," "Atoner," "Lamb of God," and "peculiarly a Messenger and Son of God;" yet she thoroughly believes with Goethe* that all

[1] *At Home and Abroad,* p. 72 ff.

[2] See Margaret Fuller's *Credo;* Appendix, p. 253.

* "It is right that forms of religion should not be bestowed directly by God himself, but *as the work of eminent men.*"—*Eckermann's Conversations with Goethe,* Feb. 28, 1830.

great geniuses are inspired, and are, in this way, also sons of God, in that they, too, present us with higher ideals of life and beauty, whether moral, mental, or physical. She believes that man in his highest perfection will not conform to the ideal or type presented by any one of the great, inspired geniuses, but that he will embody what is highest and best in all of them, in short, that he "will live out all the symbolical forms of human life with the calm beauty and physical fulness of a Greek god, with the deep consciousness of a Moses, with the holy love and purity of Jesus." [1] "You see," she writes in commenting on this part of her creed, "how wide the gulf that separates me from the Christian Church."

Closely related to this idea of the genius is Margaret Fuller's conception of man's mission as a creator. In the *Credo,* and in her "Conversations," she devoted much thought to the question: What is life? and what relation do God and man bear to the creation and development of life forms? In giving a definition of life at one of the "Conversations," one of her reporters writes: "She began with God as spirit, Life, so full as to create and love eternally, yet capable

[1] See Appendix, p. 253 f., 256.

of pause. Love and creativeness are dynamic forces, out of which we individually, as creatures, go forth bearing his image, that is, having within our being the same dynamic forces, by which we also add constantly to the total sum of existence, and shaking off ignorance, and its effects, and by becoming more ourselves, i. e., *more divine;* [or as Goethe puts it: "Desto ähnlicher bist du den Göttern,"] destroying sin in its principle, *we attain to absolute freedom,* we return to God, conscious like himself, and, as his friends, giving as well as receiving felicity forevermore. In short *we become gods* and *able to give the life* which we now feel ourselves able only to receive."[1]

There is no question that Margaret Fuller, in placing such vital emphasis upon life and activity, was here deeply influenced by Goethe, in whose thinking and conduct this conception of life was one of the fundamental principles.

"The highest attribute that we have received from God and nature," says Goethe, " is *life,* the rotating movement of the monad about itself, which knows neither rust nor rest. The impulse to preserve and nourish life is born indestructibly into

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 346 f.

every one; the characteristic feature of the same remains, however, a secret to us and others." "The second gift from the beings operating from above," Goethe continues, "is the experienced in life, the becoming conscious, the taking part of the living, active monad in the environments of the outer world, by which it first becomes conscious of itself as an inner infinite and externally finite being." [1]

The close relation between these thoughts and those expressed by Margaret Fuller in the extract quoted from her "Conversations" is self-evident. The attainment of this absolute inner freedom, of which she speaks here, Goethe claimed as one of his great achievements. "Whoever, has learned to understand them [Goethe's writings] and my being, at all," he said to Chancellor von Müller toward the end of his life, "will have to confess that he has gained a certain inner freedom." The same claim as a liberator he repeats in the verses:

"Ihr könnt mir immer ungescheut,
Wie Blüchern, Denkmal setzen;

[1] *Sprüche in Prosa,* (1028), (1029).

Von Franzen hat er euch befreit,
Ich von Philisternetzen."*

In saying "We become gods, and able to give the life which we now feel ourselves able only to receive,—" i. e., we become creators—, Margaret Fuller expresses the same idea that Goethe does in his poem, *Wiederfinden,* in the lines:

"Allah braucht nicht mehr zu schaffen,
Wir erschaffen seine Welt."**

Also in the poem *Eins und Alles* occur these lines:

"Dann mit dem Weltgeist selbst zu ringen
Wird unserer Kräfte Hochberuf."***

Margaret Fuller's deep interest in Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* which she translated and in which she found a considerable part of the ideas expressed in her *Credo,* was most probably due to the fact that it contained so many of

* "You may always, without fear, erect to me
As to Blücher, monuments;
He has freed you from the French,
I, from the snares of pedants."

** "Allah needs to work no longer,
We create his world."

*** "For to vie with the world-spirit itself,
Becomes the high calling of our powers."

Goethe's religious views. In this work Goethe uses many expressions concerning man's mission as a creator, similar to those of Margaret Fuller. Goethe's *Das Göttliche* and *Prometheus,* both of which Margaret Fuller translated, also express the same ideas and appealed to her strongly.[1] That she was aroused by the latter poem to show the same Titanic, Promethean feelings that Goethe manifested in his youth, is shown by the following passage from one of her letters, quoted by Emerson. Sending her translation of Goethe's *Prometheus* to a friend she writes:—"Which of us has not felt the questionings expressed in this bold fragment? Does it not seem, were we gods or could steal their fire, we could make men not only happier, but free, glorious?" [2] No American critic comes as near as she here does to a full understanding of the secret of Goethe's "Storm and Stress period," and the true mission of his work. The sober Emerson, saw, of course in such expressions of hers only the presence of "a rather mountainous ME." [3]

From a thorough study of Margaret Fuller's *Credo,* as a whole, we see even a closer relation

[1] See Chapter on Interpretation of Goethe, pp. 167, 237.
[2] *Memoirs,* I. 235.
[3] Ibid., p. 236.

between her conception of God, man, and the universe, and that of Goethe than is evident from a few single passages picked out here and there at random. In such a study it is clear that, though Margaret Fuller has all existence result from "Spirit," yet Goethe's doctrine of Spirit-Nature was in her mind; since this spirit (Weltseele) whose "depths are unknown to itself," becomes conscious only by living and "Seeks to know itself" in the working principle of Nature, "thus evolving plants, animals, men, suns, etc." This close relation is evident when we compare what she says here with what Goethe says in his poems, *Proömion, Eins und Alles,* and in *Sprüche in Prosa* (912):

> Im Namen dessen, der *sich selbst erschuf!*
> *Von Ewigkeit im schaffenden Beruf;*
>
> . . . .
>
> In jenes Namen, der so oft genannt,
> Dem Wesen nach blieb immer unbekannt."[1]*

[1] Goethe's *Proömion.*

* "In the name of him *who made himself!*
Who from eternity was employed in creating;

. . . .

In his name, who so often named,
Has ever remained unknown as to the nature of his being."

Concerning this spirit that "manifests" and "knows itself" in its creations, compare:—

"Was wär ein Gott, der nur von Aussen stiesse,
Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen liesse!
Ihm ziemt's die Welt *im Innern* zu bewegen,
Natur in sich, sich in Natur zu hegen."*[1]

And of the continuity of this creation and evolution of "congenial forms," of which she speaks, Goethe says:

"Und umzuschaffen das Geschaffne,
Damit sich's nicht zum Starren waffne,
Wirkt lebendiges Thun.
Und was nicht war, nun will es werden
Zu reinen Sonnen, farbigen Erden.**[2]

"Das *Werdende,* das ewig wirkt und lebt."***[3]

Very near is Margaret Fuller's conception of

* "What were a God who moved [the world] only from without,
Who let the All circle about his finger!
It becomes him to move the World *inwardly,*
To preserve Nature in himself, himself in Nature."
[1] *Goethe's Gedichte,* Hempel Ed. II. 368.
** "And to re-create the created,
That it may not become barren and resist [this continuous process of creation]
Calls for living action.
And what ne'er was is on the point of becoming
Pure suns, variegated earths."—[2] Goethe's *Eins und Alles.*
*** "The *becoming* [that which is in the *process of creation*], which ever works and lives."—[3] *Faust,* l. 346.

the phenomena of the All and the activity of the creative Spirit (Weltseele), which she describes in the *Credo,* to that contained in Goethe's *Sprüche in Prosa* (912):

"The fundamental characteristic of the living unity is: to separate, to unite, to lose itself in the universal, to abide in the particular, to transform itself, to specify itself, and as the living, to demonstrate itself under a thousand conditions, and again to emerge and to disappear, to solidify and to melt, to coagulate and to flow, to expand and to contract. Now because all these actions go on in the same moment of time, every and each phenomenon may appear at the same time. Coming into existence and passing away, creating and destroying, birth and death, joy and sorrow, everything goes on in confusion, pell-mell, in the same sense and in the same measure; for that reason, then, the most extraordinary that takes place, always appears as an image and likeness of the most universal."

Concerning the manner in which we begin to interpret the Universe and find "deeper depths opened with each soul," by breaking through an obstruction "by faith" and thus making new dis-

coveries, Goethe again says in *Sprüche in Prosa* (903):

"Everything that we invent, discover, in the higher sense call by name, is the significant putting into execution, the giving practical proof of an original feeling for *truth,* which long since developed in silence unexpectedly, and as quick as lightning leads us to a fruitful perception. It is a revelation developed from within, by means of the external, which permits man to have a presentiment of his godlikeness. It is a synthesis of World and Spirit, which gives us the happiest assurance of the harmony of our being."

Further on in the *Credo* is also Goethean thought, though clothed in the language of the church. She probably did not herself realize how much she was under the influence of Goethe. Even where she seemingly opposes him, is his great influence evident. Her whole religious creed, though containing orthodox church ideas, is fundamentally Goethean.

Evil (obstruction), Margaret Fuller believed, is as necessary in the grand scheme of creation and in the development of character, as good (accomplishment). This doctrine—that evil is only the negative side of good—appears in her *Credo,* her

letters, and in many of her principal writings, and corresponds exactly with the idea expressed by the Lord in the *Prologue in Heaven* of Goethe's *Faust:*

"Des Menschen Tätigkeit kann allzuleicht erschlaffen,
Er liebt sich bald die unbedingte Ruh;
Drum geb' ich gern ihm den Gessellen [Mephistopheles] zu,
Der reizt und wirkt und muss als Teufel schaffen."*[1]

Again in the words of Mephistopheles:

"Ich bin ein Teil von jener Kraft,
Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft."**[2]

"Thus after an unchanging law of nature evil even has brought forth good," [3] says Herder. "All destructive forces must not only in time be subdued by the forces of preservation, but must also serve to help in the building up of the

* "Man's active nature, flagging, seeks too soon the level;
Unqualified repose he learns to crave;
Whence, willingly, the comrade him I gave,
Who works, excites, and must create as Devil."
—*Bayard Taylor's Translation.*

[1] Goethe's *Faust,* ll. 336 ff.

** "I am a part of that power
Which always wills the bad, and ever works the good."

[2] Goethe's *Faust,* ll. 1335-36.

[3] Herder's *Ideen,* III. 327.

whole." [1] "Despite the fact that the destructive forces in man are his passions, the latter are necessary to prevent him from 'getting fond of unconditional repose' . . . Evil, according to this conception, acts as a leaven, a fermentative power, which finally produces good." [2]

In a dialogue which Margaret Fuller wrote, the two characters represented, speaking on a religious topic, agree "that whatever is, is good." [3] In another instance she praises the doctrine, "Resist not evil," and "every man his own priest, and the heart the only true church." [4] Again one of the reporters of the "Conversations" writes: "I have thought, sometimes, that her acceptance of evil was *too great,*—that the theory of the good to be educed proved too much. But in a conversation I had with her yesterday, I understood her better than I had done. 'It might never be sin to us, at the moment', she said, 'it must be an excess, on which conscience puts the restraint'." [5] And lastly Caroline H. Dall writes: "She [Margaret Fuller] believed evil to be a good in the grand scheme of things. She would not recognize it as a blunder.

[1] Herder's *Ideen,* p. 314.
[2] Goethe's *Faust,* Ed. Goebel; Notes, p. 264.
[3] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 185.
[4] *At Home and Abroad,* p. 55 f.
[5] *Memoirs,* I. 350.

She must consider its scope a noble one. In one word, she would not accept the world—for she felt within herself the power to reject it—did she not believe evil working in it for good! Man had gained more than he lost by his fall." [1]

This doctrine, in which she so thoroughly believed is the fundamental doctrine of *Faust* and *Wilhelm Meister*. There is little doubt that she got these ideas chiefly from these works. Certain it is that this is neither Transcendental nor Puritan doctrine.

Closely associated with Margaret Fuller's doctrine of good and evil, is her belief in a complete abandonment to our higher nature. She had, however, absolutely no patience with those who, under this pretext, gave themselves over to their passions, or who allowed sentimentality to master completely their whole being. It is thus that she criticises sharply, in the one case, George Sand, and in the other, Bettine Brentano, "I love abandon only when natures are capable of the extreme reverse," she says.[2] Emerson writes that in life, "Margaret suffered no vice to insult her presence, but called the offender to instant account, when the

[1] *Margaret and Her Friends*, p. 113 f.
[2] *Memoirs*, I. 248.

law of *right* or *beauty* was violated." [1] "Margaret crowned all her talents and virtues with a love of truth, and the power to speak it," says Emerson again.[2] Horace Greeley emphasizes the same characteristic, as do all her biographers. And with all of this she was a most natural woman. "I love best to be a woman," she, herself, said. And Emerson records, that, "In character, Margaret was, of all she had beheld, the largest woman, and not a woman who wished to be a man." [3]

It is clear that what Margaret Fuller most desired was to find out the truth of human nature; and having arrived at a complete understanding of it, ever to remain true to its highest principles and laws of development. "Like Goethe," she writes, "I have never given way to my feelings, but have lived active, thoughtful, seeking to be wise." [4]

Margaret Fuller, like Goethe, believed that a powerful, if not the most powerful agency in calling out this inner life of feeling, is poetry. She considered it "the only path of the true soul," and believed that, though "we might not always be poetic in life," yet "we might and should be poetic

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 306.
[2] Ibid., p. 303.
[3] Ibid., I. 300.
[4] Ibid., p. 197.

in our thought and intention." [1] What she has in mind here is the æsthetic education advocated by Goethe, and especially by Schiller, in which poetry is one of the most powerful agencies. What a quickening influence Goethe's poetry had upon Margaret Fuller's inner life we have already seen.[2]

Margaret Fuller's deep interest in the plastic arts was, according to Emerson, first inspired by Goethe.[3] When we read her letters and what she says on the subject in the reports of her "Boston Conversations," and in her articles in the *Dial*,[4] we readily see the relation that art must have borne to her inner life, and what she must have contributed, by her personal influence and her writings, to the rise of enthusiasm for the fine arts in and about Boston, during her time,—an enthusiasm that has grown and developed until the present day. "The fine arts," she said, "were one compensation for the necessary prose of life, —for not being able to live out our poesy amid the conflicting and disturbing forces of this moral world in which we are." Of the plastic arts

[1] *Memoirs*, I. p. 341.
[2] Cf. p. 3.
[3] *Memoirs*, I. 266 ff.
[4] *Art, Literature, and the Drama*, 284 ff.

Margaret Fuller preferred sculpture. "That was grand," she said, "when a man first thought to engrave his idea of man upon a stone, the most unyielding and material of materials,—the backbone of the phenomenal earth,—and when he did not succeed, that he persevered; and so at last, by repeated efforts, the Apollo came to be." Paintings she thought worked more by illusion. But the chief of arts was life itself, of which all other arts were merely beautiful symbols.[1] Margaret Fuller did not, however, become impractical, because she tried to live out a poetic, artistic thought. "She did not permit the search for the beautiful to transcend the limits of our social and personal duties," Mrs. Howe said. "The pursuit of æsthetic pleasure might lead us to fail in attaining the higher beauty."[2] Not "Art for Art's sake," merely, but for drawing from this source inspiration for building up a beautiful and harmonious character, and a sense of the beautiful in life: this was her doctrine, like that of Goethe and Schiller before her. She tried always to arrive at the truth lying back of beauty. The two ideas, Beauty and Truth, for her, were inseparable.

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 340 ff. [2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller,* p. 112.

Nor does our development, according to her belief, cease in this present life. "I believe in Eternal Progression," she writes. "I believe in a God, a Beauty and Perfection to which I am to strive all my life for assimilation. From these two articles of belief, I draw the rules by which I strive to regulate my life." [1] This same doctrine, that we pass from one stage to another, through a series of lives approaching ever nearer, in our development, the perfect state, is expressed also in her *Credo*.[2] This present life represents merely one of a series of lives we live, one of the several stages through which we pass on our road to perfection. Thus she criticizes Goethe, for remaining in court circles at Weimar:— "Perhaps Goethe is even now [a decade after his death] sensible that he should not have stopped at Weimar as his home, but made it one station on the way to Paradise; not stopped at humanity, but regarded it as symbolic of the divine, and given to others to feel more distinctly the center of the universe, as well as the harmony in its parts."[3]

The thought that Goethe had not yet reached his highest wisdom and perfection is also indicated

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 136.
[2] Cf. Appendix, p. 250 f.
[3] *Life Without and Life Within*, p. 45.

at the end of her second article in the *Dial:*—"Let us enter into his higher tendency, thank him for such angels as Iphigenie, whose simple truth mocks at all his wise 'Beschränkungen', and hope the hour when, girt about with many such, he *will* confess, contrary to his opinion, given in his latest days, that it *is* well worth while to live seventy years, if only to find that they are nothing in the sight of God." [1]

Here, too, we find the same thought in Goethe: "It is acknowledged that man consists of two parts, body and soul. . . . I doubt not of our immortality, for nature cannot dispense with our continued activity." [2] "Christianity has a might of its own, lifting up, from time to time, dejected, suffering humanity, and in this rises above all philosophy, and needs no support therefrom. Neither does the philosopher need the support of religion to prove certain doctrines; for instance, that existence is prolonged into eternity. Man must believe in immortality; this belief corresponds with the wants of his nature. . . . To me, the eternal existence of my soul is proved, from my need of activity; if I work incessantly till my death, nature is

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 60.
[2] *Conversations with Goethe,* p. 320.

pledged to give me another form of being when the present can no longer sustain my spirit." [1]

Margaret Fuller inherited still another characteristic of her belief from her Master, Goethe, namely, her belief in dæmonology. As Emerson has pointed out, she was naturally of a temperament to whom "coincidences, good and bad, omens, etc.," had a deep significance. This peculiar characteristic dated back to her youth and was originally due, probably, to an overtaxed nervous system, and to poor health later on. It is easily seen how naturally a belief in dæmonology, such as Goethe's, would appeal to her.

"This propensity," writes Emerson, "Margaret held with certain tenets of fate, which always swayed her, and which Goethe, who had found room and fine names for all this in his system, had encouraged; and I may add, which her own experiences, early and late, seemed strangely to justify. . . . This remote seeking for the decrees of fate, this feeling of a destiny, casting its shadows from the very morning of thought, is the most beautiful species of idealism in our day. 'Tis finely manifested in Wallenstein." [2] Tasso, Rous-

[1] *Conversations with Goethe,* Margaret Fuller's translation, p. 270.
[2] *Memoirs,* I. 222.

seau, Goethe, and Napoleon were, she believed, under this strange influence to a very high degree. She of course, as Emerson has said, believed that she, too, was swayed by this same mysterious power.

"When Goethe," she writes, "received a letter from Zelter with a handsome superscription, he said, 'Lay that aside; it is Zelter's true hand-writing. Every man has a dæmon, who is busy to confuse and limit his life. No way is the action of this power more clearly shown, than in the hand-writing. On this occasion, the evil influences have been evaded; the mood, the hand, the pen and paper have conspired to let our friend write truly himself'. . . . I think often of this little passage. With me, for weeks and months, the dæmon works his will. Nothing succeeds with me. I fall ill, or am otherwise interrupted. At these times, whether of frost, or sultry weather, I would gladly neither plant nor reap,—wait for the better times, which sometimes come, when I forget that sickness is ever possible. . . . As to the Dæmoniacal, I know not that I can say to you anything more precise than you find from Goethe. There are no precise terms for such thoughts. The word *instinctive* indicates their existence. I intimated it in

the little piece on the Drachenfels.[1] . . . When conscious, self-asserting, it becomes (as power working for its own sake, unwilling to acknowledge love for its superior, must) the devil. That is the legend of Lucifer, the star that would not own its center. Yet, while it is unconscious, it is not devilish, only dæmoniac. In nature, we trace it in all volcanic workings, in a boding position of lights, in whispers of the wind, . . . in deceitful invitations of the water, . . and in the shapes of all those beings who go about seeking what they may devour. We speak of a mystery, a dread; we shudder, but we approach still nearer, and a part of our nature listens, sometimes answers to this influence, which if not indestructible, is at least indissolubly linked with the existence of matter.

"In genius, and in character, it works, as you say instinctively; it refuses to be analyzed by the understanding, and is most of all inaccessible to the person who possesses it. We can only say, I have it, he has it. . . . It is most obvious in the eye. As we look on such eyes, we think on the tiger, the serpent, beings who lurk, glide, fascinate, mysteriously control. For it is occult by its nature, and if it could meet you on the highway, and be

[1] This is a poem she wrote and sent to a friend.

familiarly known as an acquaintance, could not exist. The angels of light do not love, yet they do not insist on exterminating it.

"It has given rise to the fables of wizard, enchantress, and the like; these beings are scarcely good, yet not necessarily bad. Power tempts them. They draw their skills from the dead, because their being is coeval with that of matter, and matter is the mother of death." [1]

In discussing further this same subject, Margaret Fuller says of the Duke of Weimar: "Goethe describes him as *Dämonisch,* that is, gifted with an instinctive, spontaneous force, which at once, without calculation or foresight, chooses the right means to an end. As these beings do not calculate, so is their influence incalculable. Their repose has as much influence over other beings as their action, even as the thunder cloud, lying black and distant in the summer sky, is not less imposing than when it bursts and gives forth its quick lightnings. . . . Sometimes, though rarely, we see such a man in an obscure position; circumstances have not led him to a large sphere; he may not have expressed in words a single

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 224 ff.

thought worth recording; but by his eye and voice he rules all around him.

"He stands upon his feet with a firmness and calm security which makes other men seem to halt and totter in their gait. In his deep eye is seen an infinite comprehension, an infinite reserve of power. No accent of his sonorous voice is lost on any ear within hearing; and, when he speaks, men hate or fear perhaps the disturbing power they feel, but never dream of disobeying."

Quoting Goethe's own words, she gives Goethe himself as an illustration of one who possessed these dæmoniacal powers: " 'The boy believed in nature, in the animate and inanimate, the intelligent and unconscious, to discover somewhat which manifested itself only through contradiction, and therefore could not be comprehended by any conception, much less defined by a word. It was not divine, for it seemed without reason; not human, because without understanding; not devilish, because it worked to good; not angelic, because it often betrayed a petulant love of mischief. It was like chance, in that it proved no sequence; it suggested the thought of Providence, because it indicated connection. To this all our limitations seem penetrable; it seemed to play at will with all

the elements of our being; it compressed time and dilated space. Only in the impossible did it seem to delight, and to cast the possible aside with disdain.

" 'This existence which seemed to mingle with others, sometimes to separate, sometimes to unite, I called the Dämonisch, after the example of the ancients, and others who have observed somewhat similar.' " [1]

" 'The Dämonisch is that which cannot be explained by reason or understanding; it lies not in my nature, but I am subject to it.

" 'Napoleon was a being of this class, and in so high a degree that scarce any one is to be compared with him. Also our late grand duke [Karl August of Weimar, Goethe's benefactor] was such a nature, full of unlimited power of action and unrest, so that his own dominion was too little for him, and the greatest would have been too little. Demoniac beings of this sort the Greeks reckoned among their demigods'." [2], [3]

Even in her last years Margaret Fuller still held to this Goethean belief in dæmonology. She

[1] Quoted by Margaret Fuller from *Dichtung und Wahrheit.*
[2] Quoted by Margaret Fuller from *Conversations with Eckermann.*
[3] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 32 f.

writes from Italy: "My days at Milan were not unmarked. I have known some happy hours, but they all lead to sorrow, and not only the cups of wine, but of milk, seem drugged with poison, for me. It does not seem to be my fault, this destiny. I do not court these things,—they come. I am a poor magnet, with power to be wounded by the bodies I attract." [1]

Margaret Fuller was, from 1840 to 1842, chief editor of the *Dial,* which was considered a Transcendental organ. It has, therefore, been supposed by many that she must also, of necessity, have been a Transcendentalist. In one of her letters is clearly stated the fact, however, that she never considered the *Dial* at the beginning of its career, nor in fact at any time during her editorship, a magazine belonging to any one sect, party, or confession, but an organ to allow free expression of thought in literature, religion, and philosophy, from any and all, whatsoever their confession or creed. So "eclectic and miscellaneous," in fact, was the magazine, according to Emerson, "that each of its readers and writers valued only a small portion of it." [2] On March 22, 1840, Margaret Fuller writes:

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 226.

[2] Ibid., p. 323.

"What others can do,—whether all that has been said is the mere restlessness of discontent, or there are thoughts really struggling for utterance,—will be tested now. A *perfectly free* organ is to be offered for the expression of *individual* thought and character. There are *no* party measures to be carried, no particular standard to be set up. A fair, calm tone, a recognition of *universal* principles, will, I hope, pervade the essays in every form. I trust there will be a spirit neither of dogmatism nor of compromise, and that this journal will aim, not at leading public opinion, but at stimulating each man to judge for himself, and to think more deeply and more nobly, by letting him see how some minds are kept alive by wise self-trust. . . . We shall manifest free action, as far as it goes, and a high aim. It were much if a periodical could be kept open, not to accomplish any outward object, but merely to afford an avenue for what of liberal and calm thought might be originated among us, by the wants of individual minds." [1]

In another letter dated April 19, 1840, Margaret Fuller says, with reference to what the people expect of the *Dial* and what they will

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 25.

not find: "Things go on pretty well, but doubtless people will be disappointed, for they seem to be looking for the gospel of Transcendentalism." [1]

The same incorrect conclusion with reference to Margaret Fuller, namely, that she shared in the doctrines of the New England Transcendentalists, has often been drawn from the mere fact that she belonged to a club designated as the "Transcendental Club,"—and also, as we have seen, the "Symposium," and "Hedge Club." But, that the club held to no one particular religious belief, or philosophy, and was, altogether, about as cosmopolitan as any club could well be, is evident from a description of it by W. H. Channing: "By mere attraction of affinity," he writes, "grew together the brotherhood of the 'Like-minded,' as they were pleasantly nick-named by outsiders, and by themselves, on the ground that no two were of the same opinion. The only password of membership to this association, which had no compact, records, or officers, was a hopeful and liberal spirit; and its chance conventions were determined merely by the desire of the caller for a 'talk,' or by the arrival of some guest from a distance with a budget of presumptive novelties.

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 25 f.

Its 'symposium' was a picnic, whereto each brought his gains as he felt prompted, a bunch of wild grapes from the woods, or bread-corn from his threshing-floor. The tone of the assemblies was cordial welcome for every one's peculiarity; and scholars, farmers, mechanics, merchants, married women, and maidens, met there on a level of courteous respect." [1]

Margaret Fuller attended these meetings, as did many others who went thither either to learn the new thoughts contributed by the other members, or who had something new to impart, whether it was "transcendental" or not.

Of course, Margaret Fuller was a very welcome and appreciated member here, for she doubtless brought many new ideas. Because of her ability to contribute so richly in thought, because of her wonderful powers of conversation, and the fact that she was a born leader, W. H. Channing might well and consistently call her "a peer of the realm" in this cosmopolitan gathering, and say she was a "member by grace of nature," [2] where any new thought was welcome, and "the only guest not tolerated, was intolerance." [3]

Her talks or "Conversations" must have been

[1] *Memoirs,* II. 14 f. [2] Ibid., II. 18. [3] Ibid., p. 15.

very effective, according to her biographers, and still more the "side-talks," which the general conversations led to. W. H. Channing says of them: "Very observable was it, also, how, in side talks with her, they became confidential, seemed to glow and brighten into their best mood, and poured out in full measure what they but scantily hinted in the circle at large." [1]

The thoughts she offered, far from being merely speculative, as was characteristic of Transcendentalism, seem to have been eminently practical, and always to have had, when the conversations turned on the subject of character-building, the great Goethean aim of an inner development of the soul, of a drawing out of what was best in the individual, at the foundation. We can probably best judge the lofty, practical character of Margaret Fuller's talks at these meetings, by those of her famous Boston "Conversations," a little later, which were of the same nature, and of which we have the reports. The great aim in these latter "Conversations" was to answer the questions "What is Life?" and "What were we born to do? and how shall we do it?" [2] In a letter intended for circulation she writes, just

[1] *Memoirs*, p. 19.

[2] Ibid., I., 325, 345.

before the beginning of one of her classes for women in 1839: "Women are now taught, at school, all that men are; they run over, superficially, even *more* studies, without being really taught anything. When they come to the business of life, they find themselves inferior, and all their studies have not given them that practical good sense, and mother wisdom, and wit." [1] "My ambition goes further. It is to pass in review the departments of thought and knowledge, and endeavor to place them in due relation to one another in our minds. To systematize thought, and give a precision and clearness in which our sex are so deficient, chiefly, I think, because they have so few inducements to test and classify what they receive. To ascertain what pursuits are best suited to us, in our time and state of society, and how we may make best use of our means for building up the *life of thought* upon the *life of action*." [2]

This all certainly sounds practical, and when the active life she lived in deed and thought is considered, we certainly cannot accuse her of transcendental self-absorption, "a withdrawal," as W. H. Channing says of the Transcendentalists,

[1] *Memoirs*, I. p. 329. [2] Ibid., I. 325.

"to private study and contemplation, that they might be 'alone with the Alone!'" [1] Margaret Fuller had always before her a definite, fixed purpose, and took steps to put it into execution as soon as she saw her way clear. She had little of that "dwelling among the clouds" and impracticality, mentioned by Channing, as characteristic of the Transcendentalists. She differed from them in character and temperament. "Her romantic freshness of heart," says Channing, "her craving for the truth; . . . her discipline in German schools had given definite form and tendency to her idealism. . . . On the other hand, strong common-sense saved her from becoming visionary." [2]

Looked at from the practical aim which Margaret Fuller always kept in view, some of her seemingly far-fetched statements in her "Conversations" appear in an entirely different light; and the little book, *Margaret and Her Friends*,—which is probably a report of the poorest series of her "Conversations"—may not be quite so meaningless. Even through these last mentioned, very meager reports we can see gleaming the great purpose she had in view. When we con-

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 13. [2] Ibid., II. 18.

sider the high positions which some of the young women belonging to Margaret Fuller's circle attained, as leaders in the thought and philanthropy of New England for over half a century, we know what these "Conversations," where what was noble and best in them was called out, meant to them. A single passage from one of these same young women, Mrs. Ednah Dow Cheney, is sufficient testimony to show what Margaret Fuller did for all of them here. "I found myself in a new world of thought;" says Mrs. Cheney, "a flood of light irradiated all that I had seen in nature, observed in life, or read in books. Whatever she spoke of revealed a hidden meaning, and everything seemed to be put into true relation. Perhaps I could best express it by saying that I was no longer the limitation of myself, but I felt that the whole wealth of the universe was open to me. It was this consciousness of the illimitable ego, the divinity in the soul, which was so real to Margaret herself. . . . She did not make us her disciples, her blind followers. She opened the book of life and helped us to read it for ourselves." [1] Without question Margaret Fuller tried here, and succeeded, in putting into effect her

[1] *Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney*, p. 205.

educational and religious ideals, and to develop the inner life of each and every one in her "classes" after the manner in which she had herself been so powerfully developed by Goethe.

The Transcendentalists on the other hand, according to Channing, "felt that systematic results were not yet to be looked for, and that in sallies of conjecture, glimpses and flights of ecstacy, the 'Newness' lifted her veil to her votaries." [1] Mrs. Howe calls Transcendentalism "beautiful and inconvenient," and says, "Method it could not boast. Free discussion, abstinence from participation in ordinary social life and religious worship, a restless seeking for sympathy, and a constant formulation of *sentiments* which, *exalted in themselves*, seemed to lose something of their character by the frequency with which they were presented,—these were some of the traits which Transcendentalism showed." [2]

That Margaret Fuller did not consider herself a Transcendentalist, but saw clearly the differences between herself and them, is further shown by her own description and discussion of Transcendentalism, its causes and failings. She writes, in 1840, concerning the superficial foundation upon

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 14. [2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller*, p. 90 f.

which it was forced to build,—the materialism, "the slight literary culture," and "this hasty way of thinking:"

"Since the Revolution, there has been little, in the circumstances of this country, to call out the higher sentiments. The effect of continued prosperity is the same on nations as on individuals, —it leaves the nobler faculties undeveloped. The need of bringing out the physical resources of a vast extent of country, the commercial and political fever incident to our institutions, tend to fix the eyes of men on what is local and temporary, on the external advantages of their conditions. The superficial diffusion of knowledge, unless attended by a correspondent deepening of its sources, is likely to vulgarize rather than to raise the thought of a nation, depriving them of another sort of education through sentiments of reverence, and leading the multitude to believe themselves capable of judging what they but dimly discern. They see a wide surface, and forget the difference between seeing and knowing. In this hasty way of thinking and living they traverse so much ground that they forget that not the sleeping railroad passenger, but the botanist, the geologist, the poet, really see the country, and that to the former,

'a miss is as good as a mile.' In a word, the tendency of circumstances has been to make our people superficial, irreverent, and more anxious to get a living than to live mentally and morally. This tendency is no way balanced by the slight literary culture common here, which is mostly English, and consists in a careless reading of publications of the day, having the same utilitarian tendency with our own proceedings. The infrequency of acquaintance with any of the great fathers of English lore marks this state of things."

Concerning the Transcendentalists themselves and their characteristics, she says: "New England is now old enough,—some there have leisure enough,—to look at all this; and the consequence is a violent reaction, in a small minority [the Transcendentalists], against a mode of culture that rears such fruits. They see that political freedom does not necessarily produce liberality of mind, nor freedom in church institutions—vital religion; and, seeing that these changes cannot be wrought from without inwards, they are trying to quicken the soul, that they may work from within outwards. Disgusted with the vulgarity of a commercial aristocracy, they become *radicals;* disgusted with the materialistic working of 'rational' religion,

they become *mystics*. They quarrel with all that is, because it is not spiritual enough. They would, perhaps, be patient if they thought this the mere sensuality of childhood in our nation, which it might outgrow; but they think that they see the evil widening, deepening,—not only debasing the life, but corrupting the thought of our people, and they feel that if they know not well what should be done, yet that the duty of every good man is to utter a protest against what is done amiss.

"Is this protest undiscriminating? are these opinions crude? do these proceedings threaten to sap the bulwarks on which men at present depend? I confess it all." [1] She did not believe in their extreme subjectivity and lack of historical sense, or in carrying the idea of "transcending sense and time" too far; for, as W. H. Channing writes:

"By their very posture of mind, as seekers of the new, the Transcendentalists were critics and 'come-outers' from the old. Neither the church, the state, the college, society, nor even reform associations had a hold upon their hearts. The past might be well enough for those who without make-believe, could put faith in common dogmas and usages; but for them . . . the herald-trump of

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 26 ff.

freedom was heard upon the mountains." [1] Margaret Fuller hopes, however, they will yet "learn how to make use of the past, as well as to aspire for the future, and be true in the present moment." [2] "Civilization," she said, "must be homogeneous,—must be a natural growth." [3] She agreed with the Transcendentalists that a reform was urgent; but to cut absolutely loose from the past, to reject all that the ages gone by had left us as a heritage, good and bad alike, seemed to her too revolutionary, too radical. There was much worthy of preservation. Dreaming in their mysticism,* the Transcendentalists, she believed, often lost themselves in idle visions of a perfect state of society. "Utopia," she writes, "it is impossible to build up. At least, my hopes for our race on this one planet are more limited than those of most of my friends." "I accept," she says with Goethe, "the limitations of human nature, and believe a wise acknowledgement of them one of the best conditions of progress." [4]

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 14. [2] Ibid., p. 29.
[3] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 186.
* Margaret Fuller, like Goethe, believed "There ought really to be no Christian mystics at all, since religion itself presents mysteries enough. Christian mystics, too, always go immediately into the abstruse, into the abysses of the subject." (Goethe's *Sprüche in Prosa*, 297.)
[4] *Memoirs*, II. 29.

Even concerning the subjects which she had been unable to investigate, because of her position as a woman, and the many private duties which occupied her time, she says; "I suppose, if I ever become capable of judging, I shall differ from most of them [the Transcendentalists] on important points." [1] One of the points in which she, the pupil of Goethe, differed essentially from the Transcendentalists was as to what should be done with the "Material" part of man, that is, his physical nature. They, in common with the other religious sects, and as has been pointed out, with Kant's philosophy, had regarded this side of man as the seat of *original sin,* or *radical evil,* and were consequently decrying continually its irrepressible assertions, as "sluggishness" and "worldliness" of spirit.[2] Margaret Fuller felt sharply that it was here where the difference between the concealed Puritanism of the Transcendentalists and the progressive and higher ethical principles of Goethe-Schiller becomes apparent. It is, in a way, the difference between the idealist and the realist which Schiller describes so masterfully in his essay *Ueber Naïve und Sentimentale Dichtung.* "That is the real life," Margaret

[1] *Memoirs,* II. 29 f. [2] Ibid., p. 30.

Fuller writes, "which is subordinated to, not merged in, the ideal; *he is only wise who can bring the lowest act of his life into sympathy with its highest thought.* And this I take to be the only aim of our pilgrimage here. I agree with those who think that no true philosophy will try to ignore or *annihilate* the material part of man, but will rather *seek to put it in its place,* as servant and minister to the soul." [1]

While the differences between Margaret Fuller's belief and that of the Transcendentalists were evident to her, and while she discerned clearly their chief failings, she was not blind to the good traits which they had. She could not help but consider their *aim* a true one, and their schemes noble in intention. She sympathized with them in this respect: that they—impractical as their schemes may have been—meant to ennoble human nature, and that they had, in truth, "poetic manifestations," and "a standard transcending sense and time" [2] among a people whose mind and energies she thought, were, at the time, bent entirely too much upon the present and the accumulation of material resources. She sees the "promise of a better wisdom" among the Tran-

[1] *Memoirs,* II. 30 f. [2] Ibid., II. 29.

scendentalists than among the great materialistic, comfort-loving majority of their fellow-countrymen. She has confidence, "despite their partial views, imperfectly developed characters, and frequent want of practical sagacity," that, "if they have opportunity to state and discuss their opinions, they will gradually sift them, and ascertain their grounds and aims with clearness." "I hope for them," she concludes, "as for the 'leaven that is hidden in the bushel of meal till all be leavened.' The leaven is not good by itself, neither is the meal; let them combine and we shall yet have bread." [1]

Here, throughout this discussion, it is again perfectly clear that Margaret Fuller did not count herself among the Transcendentalists, and that her sympathy for them was merely a hope that they would in time see more clearly and "do the work this country needs." She is always careful to speak of them in the third person. She always makes a sharp distinction between "they" and "I," and never says "we" in referring to them.

The desire of the Transcendentalist to withdraw from the hum and bustle of city life, that he might be more "alone with the Alone" and live

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 28 f.

more a life of meditation, probably had much to do with the establishment of the community at Brook Farm, a scheme with which Margaret Fuller was never in sympathy, though she visited her friends there. She had at most, only a partial faith in the doctrines of Fourier, which the Brook Farmers had adopted, and which were similar to those of Rousseau, much as Rousseau had charmed her when she first read him. In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Margaret Fuller discusses at some length Fourier's doctrines and social reform schemes, states her objections to them, and compares them with Goethe's solution of the same vexed problem, namely the betterment of society. Though she calls Fourier an "Apostle of the new order. . . that is to rise from love," she thinks he is only partially right. He lays too much stress on the external side of man's nature and not enough on the internal.

"The mind of Fourier," she writes, "though grand and clear, was in some respects superficial. He was a stranger to the highest experiences. His eye was fixed on the outward more than on the inward needs of Man. . . . On the opposite side of the advancing army leads the great Apostle of individual culture, Goethe. Swedenborg makes

organization and union the necessary results of solitary thought. Fourier, whose nature was, above all, constructive, looked to them too exclusively. Better institutions he thought, will make better men. Goethe expressed, in every way, the other side. If one man could present better forms, the rest could not use them till ripe for them. Fourier says, As the institution, so the men! All follies are excusable and natural under bad institutions. Goethe thinks, As the man, so the institutions! There is no excuse for ignorance and folly. A man can grow in any place, if he will." [1]

Margaret Fuller does not, indeed, agree entirely with either one of these reformers in the sweeping generality of their statements. She believes that "bad institutions are prison-walls;" but, on the other hand, that it is folly to "expect to change mankind at once, or even 'in three generations'," as Fourier and the Brook Farmers proposed to do, "by arrangement of groups and series, or flourish of trumpets for attractive industry. If these attempts are made by unready men," she concludes, "they will fail." [2] Margaret

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 123 ff.
[2] Ibid., p. 124.

Fuller favors rather a union of the two systems. With Goethe she believes that character should be built up and strengthened from within; but also, that the institutions of society, without, should be improved and made to aid man in his upward tendency.

After discussing the great characters in Goethe's masterpieces in this same work of hers, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* Margaret Fuller expresses her satisfaction with his doctrine, and shows wherein he is superior to Fourier, and why she prefers Goethe.

"Goethe's book [*Wilhelm Meister*]," she writes, "bodes an era of freedom like its own of 'extraordinary, generous-seeking,' and new revelations. New individualities shall be developed in the actual world, which shall advance upon it as gently as the figures come out upon his canvas.

"I have indicated on this point the coincidence between his hopes and those of Fourier, though his [Goethe's] are directed by an infinitely higher and deeper knowledge of human nature." "It is to Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Wandering Years that I would especially refer, as these volumes contain the sum of the Sage's observations during a long life, as to what Man should do,

under present circumstances, to obtain mastery over outward, through an initiation into inward life, and severe discipline of faculty." In this same connection she says: "In all these expressions of Woman, the aim of Goethe is satisfactory to me. He aims at a pure self-subsistance, and a free development of any powers with which they may be gifted by nature as much for them as for men. They are units, addressed as souls." [1] Nothing could be clearer here than that Margaret Fuller accepted Goethe's solution of character-building in preference to Fourier's whose doctrines the Brook Farm Transcendentalists attempted to put into practice and live out in their community at West Roxbury, Massachusetts.

Margaret Fuller was unlike the Transcendentalists, also, in that she was not at all given to speculation on vague philosophical qustions, as such. She wanted something practical, something that bore a real relation to her inner life and development. "I have always felt," she writes, "that man must know how to stand firm on the ground, before he can fly." [2] She evidently shared with Goethe the same contempt for metaphysics which found its clear expression in the advice of

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 126 f.
[2] *Memoirs*, I. 20.

Mephistopheles to the student in *Faust,* for she writes in a letter, September, 1832: "Not see the use of metaphysics? A moderate portion, taken at stated intervals, I hold to be of much use as discipline of the faculties. I only object to them as having an absorbing and anti-productive tendency. . . . The brain," she concludes, "does not easily get too dry for *that* [Metaphysics]." [1] In meditating a Life of Goethe she speaks again of "that indisposition, or even dread" [2] of the study of Metaphysics. With Novalis she agrees that "Philosophy is peculiarly home-sickness, an overmastering desire to be at home," and asks: "But what is there *all-comprehending,* eternally-conscious about that?" "I *do* want a system," she says, "which shall suffice to my character, and in whose application I shall have faith. I do not wish to *reflect* always, if reflecting must be always about one's identity, whether *'ich'* am the true 'ich,' etc. I wish to arrive at that point where I can trust myself, and leave off saying, 'It seems to me,' and boldly feel, It *is* so TO ME. My character has got its natural regulator, my heart beats, my lips speak truth, I can walk alone, or offer my arm to a friend, or if I lean on another, it is not the

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 124. [2] Ibid., p. 127.

debility of sickness, but only wayside weariness. This is the philosophy *I* want; this much would satisfy *me*." [1]

From these statements and from what she said of the individual philosophers whom she studied, it is very clear that, unlike the Transcendentalists, she had little liking for speculative philosophy; so little in fact, that like Goethe, she did not find this study a congenial field at all.

Dr. Goddard, though he admits and shows that Margaret Fuller was greatly influenced by Goethe, seems to have tried to make a great deal out of the single passage from one of Margaret Fuller's letters, concerning the influence of Emerson on her; thereby evidently trying to make her out a Transcendentalist, as Emerson was. In the passage quoted Margaret Fuller writes: "You question me as to the nature of the benefits conferred upon me by Mr. E.'s preaching. I answer, that his influence has been more beneficial to me than that of any American, and that from him I first learned what is meant by an inward life." [2]

But the very fact that she confines her statement to *American,* and does not make it perfectly general, is unmistakable evidence that she had in

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 123. [2] Ibid., I. 194 f.

mind some one else *not* American, who exercised a greater and more beneficial influence on her. No doubt Emerson had a considerable influence on her,—greater than that of any other American. He doubtless appealed to her profounder thoughts, and may also have awakened reminiscences of her subconscious inborn Puritan ideas. But as proof that Goethe's influence was greater, and that he was the chief source for her inner life and development, we have both, her own words, and those of Emerson himself, words which are conclusive and leave no doubt whatever.[1]

It was well known that Margaret Fuller and Emerson were different in character and could not agree in their doctrines, religious as well as philosophical. Emerson was preëminently a thinker. He placed his greatest emphasis upon the intellect, often to the exclusion of the other faculties of the inner life. His was chiefly a life of thought, and not of feeling, and doubtless, therefore, he often seemed to his contemporaries as austere as some of his Puritan ancestors. All this was true despite his intellectuality and dissent from all traditional, formal church creeds. He seldom came into a genuine heart-to-heart touch with his fellow beings

[1] Cf. Chapter II above, pp. 52 f., 63 ff.

or experienced any real glow of the emotional side of his nature. This fact explains the severe criticism which he now and then hurled against Goethe. Goethe was too human for him, and laid too much stress upon the emotional and material side of man's nature to please him. Living thus largely the life of an ascetic, a life based primarily upon the intellect, and still holding somewhat closely in practice to the traditional Puritan church doctrines, Emerson naturally distrusted, and often disdained, anything that had to do with the emotions of the heart and the natural inclinations of human nature. Its presence repelled him so that he did not look for any reason why the author may have put it there. He could, therefore, not understand that Goethe, in taking note of this part of human nature, meant to give the emotions and passions a healthy development, meant to refine them and bring them, as Margaret Fuller has so beautifully expressed it, "into sympathy with his highest thought," instead of trying to "crucify" them, as the traditional church had long attempted to do. Emerson did not see this until later in life. He saw only that Goethe treated of something which he considered immodest and immoral, and therefore writes to Carlyle: "The

Puritan in me accepts no apology for bad morals in such as he." [1]

Margaret Fuller calls Emerson's philosophy the "white light," to distinguish it from the rosy light and glow of feeling expressed in the morning and evening skies. Margaret Fuller lived an intense life, full of glow and feeling, as well as thought,—"Viel denken, mehr empfinden," * as Goethe puts it.** She believed that to think was only a part of life. To feel and to act were to her just as important. She had little sympathy with confining her joys to "mental ecstacies" such as Emerson's chiefly were. "Is it not nobler and truer," she wrote to W. H. Channing in 1842, "to live than to think? [2] . . . Really to feel the glow of action, without its weariness, what heaven it must be!" [3] "She and Mr. Emerson met," says Caroline H. Dall, "like Pyramus and Thisbe, a blank wall between. With Mr. Alcott she had no

[1] Cf. pp. 150 ff.; also *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence,* p. 29.

* "Think much, feel more."

** "The thinking person errs especially," says Goethe, "when he inquires after *cause* and *effect;* the two together comprise the inseparable phenomenon. He who can comprehend that is upon the right road to action, to *deeds.* The genetic process already leads us upon better ways, even though we fall short in our attempt. *Sprüche in Prosa,* p. 641.

[2] "Gedenke zu leben,"—Think to live, Goethe says in one of his maxims.

[3] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* pp. 308-309.

patience." [1] Later on in the same work Mrs. Dall mentions this same fact again: "E. P. P. [Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, one of Margaret Fuller's most intimate friends] got into a little maze trying to introduce Margaret and R. W. E. to each other, —a consummation which, however devoutly to be wished, will never happen!" [2] "While bound to each other by mutual esteem and admiration," says Mrs. Howe, "Margaret and Mr. Emerson were opposites in natural tendency if not in character. While Mr. Emerson never appeared to be modified by any change of circumstance, *never melted nor took fire,* but was always and everywhere himself, the soul of Margaret was subject to a *glowing passion* which raised the temperature of the social atmosphere around her. . . . A priestess of *life-glories,* she magnified her office . . . . Mr. Emerson had also a priesthood, but of a different order. The calm, severe judgment, the unpardoning taste, the deliberations which not only preceded but also followed his utterances, carried him to a remoteness from the common life of common people, and allowed no intermingling of this life with his own." [3]

[1] *Margaret and Her Friends,* p. 13.
[2] Ibid., p. 118 f.
[3] Howe, *Margaret Fuller,* p. 84 f.

Nothing characterizes better the difference between the Puritan spiritualist and the pupil of Goethe's broad humanity than the following passage by the reporter of the "Conversations:"

"Mr. E. only served to display her powers. With his sturdy reiteration of his *uncompromising idealism,* his absolute denial of the fact of human nature, he gave her opportunity and excitement to unfold and illustrate her *realism* and acceptance of conditions. . . . She proceeds in her search after the unity of things, the divine harmony,* *not by exclusion,* as Mr. E. does, *but by comprehension,*—and so, no poorest, saddest spirit, but she will lead to hope and faith." [1]

This last passage is important, for Margaret Fuller's realism is exactly the kind in which Goethe believed, a realism which, when carefully studied and understood, gives an insight into life, and serves as a foundation for character building. Margaret Fuller's cry was "Truth at all hazards!"

* Compare Goethe's *Tasso:*

"Die letzten Enden aller Dinge will
Sein Geist zusammenfassen"; and *Faust* (I. ll. 382-4)
"Dass ich erkenne, was die Welt
Im Innersten zusammenhält."
"The final limits of all things
His soul seeks to comprehend,"
"That I might understand what holds the world
Together within its innermost (parts)."

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 349 f.

But, as it was with Goethe, it was "the ideal truth, which Margaret followed so zealously," [1] a truth when expressed, that gave her hearers faith in humanity and in themselves, and called out the best that was in them.

Emerson himself gave a faithful description of the difference between his character and belief and that of Margaret Fuller. "Our moods were very different," he says, "and I remember, that, at the very time when I, slow and cold, had come fully to admire her genius, and was congratulating myself on the solid good understanding that subsisted between us, I was surprised with hearing it taxed by her with superficiality and halfness. She stigmatized our friendship as commercial. It seemed, her magnanimity was not met, but I prized her only for the thoughts and pictures she brought me; —so many thoughts, so many facts, yesterday,—so many to-day;—when there was an end of things to tell, the game was up; that, I did not know, as a friend should know, to prize a silence as much as a discourse,—and hence a forlorn feeling was inevitable; a poor counting of thoughts, and a taking the census of virtues, was the unjust reception so much love found. On one occasion, her grief

[1] Howe, *Margaret Fuller,* p. 136.

broke into words like these: 'The religious nature remained unknown to you, because it could not proclaim itself, but claimed to be divined. The deepest soul that approached you was, in your eyes, nothing but a magic lantern, always bringing out pretty shows of life'." [1]

Lacking, of course, this truly human warmth and glow of the soul, the depth of her *Gemüth* which she had found through Goethe and demanded from all her friends towards herself, Emerson could not understand her tone, and asked her to explain. "Let us hold hard to the *common sense,*" he said to her by letter, "and let us speak in the *positive* degree." "Does water meet water?" she asks, half satirically, half in fun, in her answer, "no need of wine, sugar, spice, or even a *soupçon* of lemon to remind of a tropical climate? I fear me not. Yet, dear *positives,* believe me superlatively yours, MARGARET." [2]

Again she writes to Emerson of what is going on in her inner life,—of the change and deepening of her nature which was taking place about this time (1840). But at the end of the letter she asks: "Why do I write thus to one who must ever regard the deepest tones of my nature as

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 288. [2] Ibid., I. 289.

those of childish fancy or worldly discontent?" [1] At another time she writes two descriptions of the *Drachenfels,* one prose and one poetic, both full of feeling, and says: "I had twenty minds to send it [the poetic one] you as a literary curiosity; then I thought, this might destroy relations, and I might not be able *to be calm and chip marble with you any more,* if I talked to you in magnetism and music." [2]

Emerson, slow, cool, and collected as ever, reasons over all these matters and finally reaches the following conclusions as to her character: "Her nature was so large and receptive, so sympathetic, . . . so womanly in her understanding. . . . Her heart was underneath her intellectualness, her mind was reverent, her spirit devout." [3] Nevertheless "She was vexed at a want of sympathy on my part," [4] and, "in short, Margaret often loses herself in sentimentalism. . . . Her integrity was perfect, and she was led and followed by love, and was really bent on truth, but too indulgent to the meteors of her fancy." [5]

The truth is that Emerson, the abstract, "cool" thinker, never really penetrated into the deepest

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 291. [2] Ibid., p. 230. [3] Ibid., p. 316.
[4] Ibid., p. 308. [5] Ibid., I. 280.

sources of at least one great aspect of her character and wonderful personality. By his very make-up he could not understand this side of her nature, namely, the part that feeling played in her life, nearly so well as those who owed their own inner development to her.

From these passages it is perfectly clear that Emerson was never her "spiritual father," and that he never exercised on her inner life anything like an overpowering influence, but that she had a personality distinctly different from his, and that the doctrine in which she believed, and which she acted out in life, was altogether unlike his. The fundamental thought in her doctrine was, as in that of Goethe, the harmonious development of the *whole* being, the heart as well as the mind. In the spiritualistic doctrines of Emerson and his fellow Transcendentalists, as in Puritanism and Unitarianism, the emotional and truly human side of character was badly neglected, and remained, for that reason, largely undeveloped.

One is struck, in taking a broad and comprehensive view of Margaret Fuller's philosophical and religious doctrines, by the truth of what James Freeman Clarke said of her: "She knew her thoughts as we know each other's faces; and

opinions, with most of us so vague, shadowy, and shifting, were in her mind substantial and distinct realities. . . . No sophist could pass on her a counterfeit piece of intellectual money. . . . This gave a comprehensive quality to her mind most imposing and convincing, as it enabled her to show the one Truth, or the one Law, manifesting itself in such various phenomena. Add to this her profound faith in truth, which made her a Realist of that order that thoughts to her were things." [1] It is this realism, developed in Margaret Fuller under Goethe's influence, which Mrs. Howe seems to have in mind when she writes of her: "Her sense was solid, and her meaning clear and worthy." [2] "Whilst she embellished the moment," says Emerson, "her conversation had the merit of being solid and true." [3] Certainly this seems to be true: that the terms and definitions applied to *Transcendental,* such as "lost in the clouds," "transcending common-sense," "out of touch with real practical life," "dreamy" do not well fit her.

From all these passages combined, it is perfectly evident that Margaret Fuller was *not* a

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 113.
[2] Howe, *Margaret Fuller,* p. 85.
[3] *Memoirs,* I. 312.

Transcendentalist in the accepted sense of the word, that she saw the difference between their convictions and hers clearly, and rejected their doctrines. Even the idea of an objective religion, a church that had its existence anywhere else than in the human heart, was to her, the outspoken individualist, inconceivable; though from her *Credo* it is evident that she felt no hostility toward religious systems or creeds.[1] Like Goethe and Schiller, she believed that out of our own inner being, out of the inner heart and self, are determined the highest laws for individual growth and action, and not from any principle or law that may be imposed upon us by anything that has its existence outside of our being, whether religion or philosophy. "Only give the soul freedom and room enough to grow," she says, "and it will grow from its own center." [2] It was her conviction that we must ultimately turn to the highest instincts of our inner souls for the divine source of our spiritual life,* and that the possibility of

[1] See Appendix, p. 256.

[2] *Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney*, p. 207.

*In his poem, *Schöne Individualität*, Schiller says:
"Einig sollst du zwar sein, doch eines nicht mit dem Ganzen.
Durch die Vernunft bist du eins, einig mit ihm durch das Herz.
Stimme des Ganzen ist deine Vernunft, dein Herz bist du selber:
Wohl dir, wenn die Vernunft immer im Herzen dir wohnt."
"A unit indeed you should be, but not one with the All.

a perfectly developed and rounded out life lay within our own human nature, which she considered divine.

To claim still that Margaret Fuller was a Transcendentalist, after reading from her own writings and her chief biographers, all the evidence of her close relation to Goethe, her "Master," her "parent," as she calls him, would be almost to claim that Goethe, too, was a New England Transcendentalist.

In concluding this chapter and passing an estimate on Margaret Fuller's philosophy of life and her religious convictions, nothing better, nor more authentic can be said than that which is recorded by those whom she helped to a larger and fuller life. "Her nature," said Mrs. Ednah Dow Cheney, more than forty years after Margaret Fuller's death, "was intuitive and enthusiastic, but balanced by her clear perception of the value of limitations, and guided by her absolute fidelity to truth. . . . Her method of thought was to seize the heart of the subject and develop from within. Nature readily yielded to her its spiritual

By your reason you are a unit, [and] in unity with the All through the heart.
Voice of the All is your reason, your heart you are yourself.
Happy are you, if reason always dwells in your heart."

meaning. . . . Her religion was as broad and all-embracing as her thought. I do not know the record of any spiritual life more absolutely free from theological narrowness, and yet more truly religious. The depth of her life, her joy and faith in living, was the secret of her marvelous power over others." [1] James Freeman Clarke, deeply religious, and the sincerest of Christians, said of her doctrine. "It was religious, because it recognized something divine, infinite, imperishable in the human soul,—something divine in outward nature and providence, by which the soul is led along its appointed way." [2] And Emerson records the words of one of the reporters of her "Conversations" in Boston: "What is so noble is, that her realism is transparent with idea,—her human nature is the germ of a divine life." [3]

[1] *Reminiscences of Ednah Dow Cheney*, p. 209.
[2] *Memoirs*, I. 133.
[3] Ibid., p. 349 f.

Chapter IV

DEFENCE OF GOETHE

Margaret Fuller may justly lay claim to the title of being the strongest and most effective defender Goethe had in America. Of course, to appreciate her work fully we must judge what she says of Goethe in the light of her own time and surroundings; only then can we comprehend how much she did for his proper understanding and appreciation in America. Goethe's writings, as works of art, were little appreciated in this country at the time, except by a very narrow circle of the select few. Because of an almost general misunderstanding of Goethe's principles, and sometimes a lack of knowledge on the part of the critics of what Goethe really taught and proclaimed, much severe and unjust criticism was heaped upon his works. Not only did Margaret Fuller have to counteract the influence of such criticisms, but also to combat a narrow and very bitter religious prejudice against him. Even more, she had to defend him against influences that came

over from Germany itself, through such men as Wolfgang Menzel. What made it all the harder for Margaret Fuller, and therefore entitles her to all the more credit, was that a residue of the same Calvinistic ideals and prejudices which swayed nearly all New England at the time was born and bred in her, and continually struggled to express itself.

What great odds Margaret Fuller was forced to encounter in upholding Goethe and his principles, and how severe the prejudices and attacks against him must have been, may be seen when it is remembered that even such men of power and influence as Emerson and Longfellow attacked the great German poet with whole broadsides of adverse criticism, during the early part of their careers.

Emerson writes to Carlyle, November, 1834: "Far, far better seems to me the unpopularity of this Philosophical Poem (shall I call it?) [Sartor Resartus] than the adulation that followed your eminent friend, Goethe. With him I am becoming better acquainted, but mine must be a qualified admiration. It is a singular piece of good nature in you to apotheosize him. I cannot but regard it as his misfortune, with conspicuous bad influence

on his genius,—that velvet life he led. What incongruity for genius, whose fit ornaments and reliefs are poverty and hatred, to repose fifty years on chairs of state! And what a pity that his Duke did not cut off his head to save him from the mean end (forgive) of retiring from the municipal incense 'to arrange tastefully his gifts and medals.' Then the Puritan in me accepts no apology for bad morals in such as *he*. . . . A certain wonderful friend of mine said that 'a false priest is the falsest of false things.' But what makes a priest? A cassock? . . .

"Then to write luxuriously is not the same as to live so, but a new and worse offense. It implies an intellectual defect also, the not perceiving that the present corrupt condition of human nature (which condition this harlot muse helps to perpetuate) is a temporary or artificial state."

Carlyle answers, February 3, 1835. "Your objections to Goethe are very natural, and even bring you nearer me: nevertheless, I am by no means sure that it were not your wisdom, at this moment, to set about learning the German Language, with a view towards studying *him* mainly. . . . His is the only *healthy* mind . . . that I have discovered in Europe for long generations;

it was he that first convincingly proclaimed to me (convincingly, for I saw it done): Behold, even in this scandalous Sceptico-Epicurean generation, when all is gone but hunger and cant, it is still possible that Man be a Man." "I suspect," Carlyle concludes, "you yet know only Goethe, the Heathen (Ethnic); but you will know Goethe, the Christian, by and by, and like that one far better." [1]

At this earnest solicitation of Carlyle Emerson studied Goethe and gained a much better opinion of him; yet he writes in his journal of 1836, that he has been reading "our wise, but sensual, loved and hated Goethe." [2]

In his article on Modern Literature in the *Dial,* Emerson asks: "What shall we think of that absence of the moral sentiment [in Goethe], that singular equivalence to him of good and evil in action, which discredit his compositions to the pure?" Of *Wilhelm Meister* he says: "We are never lifted above ourselves, we are not transported out of the dominion of the senses, or cheered with an infinite tenderness, or armed with a grand trust." Emerson did not like Goethe's

[1] *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence,* Vol. I. 29 ff., 39 f.
[2] *Emerson's Works,* Boston and New York, 1903. Vol. IV. pp. 368 ff. Notes by Edward W. Emerson.

hero, Wilhelm Meister; because he "has so many weaknesses and impurities and keeps such bad company." [1] "Goethe then must be set down as . . . the poet of limitations, . . . of this world, and not of religion and hope, . . . in short, of prose, not of poetry." [2]

In his volume on *Representative Men,* published 1850, Emerson praises Goethe for his profound knowledge of human nature and for collecting and embracing within himself and his works the spirit of the age in all its tendencies and complexity. "He was the soul of his century," Emerson writes. "He said the best things about nature that ever were said." Yet in the end he finds the same faults with the poet as before, claiming that: "He is incapable of a self-surrender to the moral sentiment. . . . Goethe can never be dear to men. His is not even the devotion to pure truth; but to truth for the sake of culture." [3] Much as Emerson learned to admire the great genius of the German poet, still, writes Edward W. Emerson, the editor of Emerson's works,

[1] *Emerson's Works,* Boston and New York, 1903. Vol IV. pp. 265 f. Notes by Edward W. Emerson.
[2] Ibid., Vol. XII. pp. 328 ff.
[3] *Emerson's Works,* Vol IV. pp. 260 f., 270. Notes by Edward W. Emerson.

"Always in his praise of Goethe there was a reserve, a protest spoken or unspoken." [2]

Longfellow, too, in his "Hyperion," gives us his view of Goethe, which is really the gist of his lectures on him in Harvard College during the summer of 1838.

Though, like Emerson, he admired Goethe for a great many admirable qualities, he says: "His philosophy is the old Ethnic philosophy. . . . What I most object to in the old gentleman is his sensuality." He mentions then, as immoral, the *Roman Elegies,* and "that monstrous book, the *Elective Affinities,*" and further says, "The artist shows his character in the choice of his subject. Goethe never sculptured an Apollo nor painted a Madonna. He gives us only sinful Magdalens and rampant Fauns." [2]

Even greater was the enmity of the public against Goethe, so great in fact that even Emerson takes the part of Goethe against them. "—— pleased the people of Boston," writes Emerson (1844), "by railing at Goethe in his Phi Beta Kappa oration because Goethe was not a New England Calvinist." [3]

[1] *Emerson's Works,* Vol IV. p. 371.
[2] *Hyperion,* pp. 142 f., New York.
[3] *Emerson's Works,* Vol. IV. p. 371. Notes.

These are a few expressions of the sentiment in the midst of which Margaret Fuller lived, and the conditions under which she labored in her efforts to encourage a more general study of Goethe and his doctrines in New England.

Margaret Fuller has left us two records of the arguments which she used in her masterful defense of Goethe against those who were assailing him. In the preface to her translation of Eckermann's *Conversation with Goethe* she answers all the charges brought against the poet by her countrymen and the English critics; and in her first article in the *Dial* she defends him against Wolfgang Menzel, whose criticism of Goethe Professor Felton of Harvard College had translated.*

In the preface to her translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* she says: "It may not be amiss to give some intimation (more my present limits do not permit) of the grounds on which Goethe is, to myself, an object of peculiar interest and constant study.

"I hear him much assailed by those among us

* Since Margaret Fuller's Works are very often inaccessible to the reader, the quotations from them in the present and the following chapter are frequently given at some length. Moreover, it was thought best, in order to gain a full appreciation of her criticisms, to collect and present the main thoughts, with but few comments, just as they stand in her various works.

who know him, some few in his own language, but most from translations of 'Wilhelm Meister' and 'Faust.' These, his two great works, in which he proposed to himself the enigma of life, and solved it after his own fashion, were, naturally enough, selected, in preference to others, for translating. This was, for all but the translators, unfortunate, because these two, above all others, require a knowledge of the circumstances and character from which they rose, to ascertain their scope and tendency." [1]

"The great movement in German literature" Margaret Fuller says, "is too recent to be duly estimated, even by those most interested to examine it;" because she thought, there was still "the feeling of fresh creative life at work there." Any conclusive criticism upon this important literary period and upon its greatest literary genius, Goethe, was therefore somewhat premature then, Goethe having passed away only a few years before. With these critics "who declare, from an occasional peep through a spy-glass," what they see and think of the great poet, she has no patience. She wishes him judged from the great historical standpoint,—the only one which we

[1] Preface to Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* x f.

consider valid today. "Would these hasty critics," she writes, "but recollect how long it was before similar movements in Italy, Spain, France, and England, found their proper place in the thoughts of other nations, they would not think fifty years' investigation too much for fifty years' growth, and would no longer provoke the ire of *those who are lighting their tapers at the German torch.* . . . The objections usually made, . . . are such as would answer themselves on a more thorough acquaintance with the subject. . . . The objections, so far as I know them, may be resolved into these classes:

> He is not a Christian;
> He is not an Idealist;
> He is not a Democrat;
> He is not Schiller."[1]

If we add to this list "He is not an orthodox churchman," we have all the arguments brought against him in America. Of Goethe's Christianity she says: "He sought always for unity. . . . A creative activity was his law. He was far from insensible to spiritual beauty in the human character. He has embodied it in its finest forms;

[1] Preface to Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* XII ff.

but he merely put it in, what seemed to him, its place, as the key-stone of the social arch, and paints neither that nor any other state with partiality. Such was his creed as a writer. 'I paint,' he seems to say, 'what I have seen; choose from it, or take it all, as you will or can.' . . . His God was rather the creative and upholding than the paternal spirit; his religion, that all his powers must be unfolded; his faith, 'that nature could not dispense with Immortality.' In the most trying occasions of his life, he referred to 'the great Idea of Duty which alone can hold us upright.' . . . Those who cannot draw their moral for themselves [from his works] had best leave his books alone; they require the power as life does. This advantage only does he give, or intend to give you, of looking at life brought into a compass convenient to your eye, by a great observer and artist, and at times when you can look uninterrupted by action, undisturbed by passion.

"He was not an Idealist: that is to say, he thought not so much of what might be as what is. He did not seek to alter or exalt Nature, but merely to select from her rich stores." This answers one of Emerson's chief reproaches against Goethe; namely, that he was too much a poet of

the Actual and stuck too close to Mother Earth. Goethe paints life as he found it, but selected from its rich stores whatever served best his purpose, which was never a low one. This also answers Margaret Fuller's own criticism further on in the preface (p. xxi) that Goethe "had the artist's eye, and the artist's hand, but not the artist's love of structure." Goethe was more than an artist. He was a combination of poet and philosopher such as the world had not seen before; his real object, as she, as also Emerson, later, justly says, was *truth,* not art alone. "I am well satisfied that 'he went the way that God and Nature called him,' " Margaret Fuller correctly concludes.

"He was an Aristocrat." This she admits, but adds: "Yet a minority is needed to keep these liberals in check, and make them pause upon their measures long enough to know what they are doing; for, as yet, the caldron of liberty has shown a constant disposition to overboil. The artist and literary man is naturally thrown into this body, by his need of repose, and a firm ground to work in his proper way. Certainly Goethe by nature belonged on that side; and no one, who can understand the structure of his mind, instead

of judging him by his outward relations, will impute to him unworthy motives. . . . To be sincere, consistent, and intelligent in what one believes, is what is important; a higher power takes care of the rest.

"In reply to those who object to him that he is not Schiller, it may be remarked that Shakespeare was not Milton, nor Ariosto Tasso. It was, indeed, unnecessary that there should be two Schillers, one being sufficient to represent a certain class of thoughts and opinions. It would be well if the admirers of Schiller would learn from him to admire and profit by his friend and coadjutor, as he himself did.

"Schiller was wise enough to judge each nature by its own law, great enough to understand greatness of an order different from his own. He was too well aware of the value of the more beautiful existences to quarrel with the rose for not being a lily, the eagle for not being a swan.

"I am not fanatical as to the benefits to be derived from the study of German literature," she says, "I am not a blind admirer of Goethe." "I suppose, indeed, that there lie the life and learning of the century [in the German literature], and that he who does not go to those

sources can have no just notion of the workings of the spirit in the European world these last fifty years or more." Margaret Fuller states frankly the faults she found with Goethe and German literature in general, for she did find some,—yet justly says, "No one who has a higher aim in reading German books than mere amusement; no one who knows what it is to become acquainted with a literature as literature, in its history of mutual influences, diverse yet harmonious tendencies, can leave aside either Schiller or Goethe; but far, far least the latter. It would be leaving Augustus Cæsar out of the history of Rome because he was not Brutus.

"Having now confessed to what Goethe is not," she further writes, "I would indicate, as briefly as possible, what, to me, he is.

"Most valuable as a means of balancing the judgment and suggesting thought from his antagonism to the spirit of the age. . . .

"As one of the finest lyric poets of modern times. Bards are also prophets; and woe to those who refuse to hear the singer, to tender him the golden cup of homage. Their punishment is in their fault.

"As the best writer of the German language,

who has availed himself of all its advantages of richness and flexibility, and added to them a degree of lightness, grace, clearness, and precision, beyond any other writer of his time. . . .

"As a critic, on art and literature, not to be surpassed in independence, fairness, powers of sympathy, and largeness of view.

"Could I omit to study this eighty years' journal of *my parent's life,* traced from so commanding a position, by so sure a hand, and one informed by so keen and cultivated an eye? Where else shall we find so large a mirror, or one with so finely decorated a frame?"

"As a mind which has known how to reconcile individuality of character with universality of thought; a mind which, whatever be its faults, ruled and relied on itself alone [Selbst Leben]; a nature which knew its law, and revolved on its proper axis, unrepenting, never bustling, always active, never stagnant, always calm." [1]

That some of the objections which Margaret Fuller expresses in this same article against Goethe, along with her praise of him, were not deeply felt and had "method" in them, is indicated by the following sentence with which she

[1] Preface to Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* XII ff.

concludes her objections: "I flatter myself I have now found fault enough to prove me a worthy critic, after the usual fashion." The fact that she calls him *her parent* outweighs all the faults she could find. Surely there can be no more influential person in our lives and esteem than a parent.

In her masterly defense of Goethe in the *Dial,* entitled *Menzel's View of Goethe,* she says: "Menzel's view of Goethe is that of a Philistine, in the least opprobrious sense of the term. It is one which has long been applied in Germany to petty cavillers and incompetent critics. I do not wish to convey a sense so disrespectful in speaking of Menzel. He has a vigorous and brilliant mind, and a wide, though imperfect, culture. He is a man of talent, but talent cannot comprehend genius. He judges of Goethe as a Philistine, inasmuch as he does not enter into Canaan, and read the prophet by the light of his own law, but looks at him from without, and tries him by a rule beneath which he never lived. That there *was* something Menzel saw; what that something was *not* he saw, but *what* it *was* he could not see; none could *see;* it was something to be felt and known at the time of its apparition, but the clear

sight of it was reserved to a day far enough removed from its sphere to get a commanding point of view. Has that day come? A little while ago it seemed so; certain features of Goethe's personality, certain results of his tendency, had become so manifest. But as the plants he planted mature, they shed a new seed for a yet more noble growth. A wider experience, a deeper insight, make rejected words come true, and bring a more refined perception of meaning already discerned. Like all his elder brothers of the elect band, the forlorn hope of humanity, he obliges us to live and grow, that we may walk by his side; vainly we strive to leave him behind in some niche of the hall of our ancestors; a few steps onward and we find him again, of yet serener eye and more towering mien than on his other pedestal. Former measurements of his size have, like the girdle bound by the nymphs round the infant Apollo, only served to make him outgrow the unworthy compass. The still rising sun, with its broader light, shows us it is not yet noon. In him is soon perceived a prophet of our own age, as well as a representative of his own; and we doubt whether the revolutions of the century be not required to interpret the quiet depths of his *Saga*.

"Sure it is that none has yet found Goethe's place, as sure that none can claim to be his peer, who has not some time, ay, and for a long time, been his pupil![1]

"Yet much truth has been spoken of him in detail, some by Menzel, but in so superficial a spirit, and with so narrow a view of its bearings, as to have all the effect of falsehood. Such denials of the crown can only fix it more firmly on the head of the 'Old Heathen.' To such the best answer may be given in the words of Bettina Brentano: 'The others criticise thy works; I only know that they lead us on and on till we live in them.' And thus will all criticism end in making men and women read these works, and 'on and on,' till they forget whether the author be a patriot or a moralist, in the deep humanity of the thought, the breathing nature of the scene. While words they have accepted with immediate approval fade from memory, these oft-denied words of keen, cold truth return with ever new force and significance.

"Men should be true, wise, beautiful, pure, and aspiring. This man was true and wise, capable of all things. . . . Can we, in a world where so

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 13 ff.

few men have in any degree redeemed their inheritance, neglect a nature so rich and so manifestly progressive?

"Historically considered, Goethe needs no apology. His so-called faults fitted him all the better for the part he had to play. In cool possession of his wide-ranging genius, he taught the imagination of Germany, that the highest flight should be associated with the steady sweep and undazzled eye of the eagle. Was he too much the connoisseur, did he attach too great an importance to the cultivation of taste, where just then German literature so much needed to be refined, polished, and harmonized? Was he too sceptical, too much an experimentalist,—how else could he have formed himself to be the keenest, and, at the same time, most nearly universal of observers, teaching theologians, philosophers, and patriots that nature comprehends them all, commands them all, and that no one development of life must exclude the rest? . . . If you want a moral enthusiast, is not there Schiller? If piety, of purest, mystic sweetness, who but Novalis? Exuberant sentiment, that treasures each withered leaf in a tender breast, look to your Richter. Would you have men to find plausible

meaning for the deepest enigma, or to hang up each map of literature, well painted and dotted on its proper roller,—there are the Schlegels. Men of ideas were numerous as migratory crows in autumn, and Jacobi wrote the heart into philosophy, as well as he could. Who could fill Goethe's place to Germany, and to the world, of which she is now the teacher? His much-reviled aristocratic turn was at that time a reconciling element. It is plain why he was what he was, for his country and his age."

In answer to Menzel's accusation that Goethe was not patriotic, she writes. " 'His mother was surprised, that when his brother and chief playmate, Jacob, died he shed no tear. . . . Afterwards, when his mother asked whether he had not loved his brother, he ran into his room and brought from under his bed a bundle of papers, all written over, and said he had done all this for Jacob.'

"Even so in later years, had he been asked if he had not loved his country and his fellow-men, he would not have answered by tears and vows, but pointed to his works. . . .

"Most men, in judging another man ask, Did he live up to our standard? But to me it seems

desirable to ask rather, Did he live up to his own? . . . If we can find out how much was given him, we are told, in a pure evangelium, to judge thereby how much shall be required.

"Now, Goethe has given us both his own standard and the way to apply it. 'To appreciate any man, learn first what object he proposed to himself; next, what degree of earnestness he showed with regard to attaining that object.'

"And this is part of his hymn for man made in the divine image, 'The Godlike.'

"Hail to the Unknown, the
Higher Being
Felt within us!

. . . .

There can none but man
Perform the impossible.
He understandeth,
Chooseth, and judgeth;
He can impart to the
Moment duration.

. . . .

Let noble man
Be helpful and good;
Ever creating
The Right and the Useful;
Type of those loftier
Beings of whom the heart whispers."

"This standard is high enough. It is what every man should express in action, the poet in music." Margaret Fuller believes, however, that Goethe, though the greatest and most sublime poet of the modern world, could have attained a yet higher level in his works. She believes that his expressions of the ideal are "glimpses of the highest spirituality", "blue sky seen through chinks in a roof which should never have been builded." "He has used life to excess," she says. "He is too rich for his nobleness, too judicious for his inspiration, too humanly wise for his divine mission. He might have been a priest; he is only a sage [who, in the modern conception of the term, is more than merely a priest; since he should not be wise only, but also point the way, as Goethe did, to a larger life]."

In answer to Menzel's and the multitude's accusation that Goethe was a debauchee and an Epicurean, which was also one of the chief accusations brought against him by many of her New England contemporaries, she asks: "Did Goethe value the present too much? It was not for the Epicurean aim of pleasure, but for use. He, in this, was but an instance of reaction in an age of painful doubt and restless striving as to the

future. Was his private life stained by profligacy? That far largest portion of his life, which is ours, and which is expressed in his works, is an unbroken series of efforts to develop the higher elements of our being." [1]

In *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* Margaret Fuller speaks of heroes, poets, and artists "with whom the habitual life tended to expand the soul, deepen and vary the experience, refine the perceptions, and immortalize the hopes and dreams of youth." That she had Goethe in mind here, as her chief example, there can be little doubt. "They were persons," she says, "who never lost their originality of character, nor spontaneity of action. Their impulses proceeded from a fulness and certainty of character that made it impossible they should doubt or repent, whatever the results of their actions might be.

"They could not repent, in matters little or great, because they felt that their actions were a sincere exposition of the wants of their souls. Their impulsiveness was not the restless fever of one who must change his place somehow or somewhither, but the waves of a tide, which might be swelled to vehemence by the action of the winds

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 13 ff.

or the influence of an attractive orb, but was none the less subject to fixed laws.

"A character which does not lose its freedom of motion and impulse by contact with the world, grows with its years more richly creative, more freshly individual. It is a character governed by a principle of its own, and not by rules taken from other men's experience; and therefore it is that

> 'Age cannot wither them, nor custom stale
> Their infinite variety.'

"Like violins, they gain by age, and the spirit of him who discourseth through them most excellent music,

> 'Like wine well kept and long,
> Heady, nor harsh, nor strong,
> With each succeeding year is quaffed
> A richer, purer, mellower draught.' " [1]

Menzel claimed that at a time when the whole German nation was wrought up by conflicting ideas and political strife Goethe was serene and calm, apparently indifferent to the calamity about him, continuing, seemingly undisturbed, his work

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 257.

as it lay mapped out before him every day. "His serenity alone, in such a time of scepticism and sorrowful seeking," Margaret Fuller says, in answer to this accusation, "gives him a claim to all our study. See how he rides at anchor, lordly, rich in freight, every white sail ready to be unfurled at a moment's warning! And it must be a very slight survey which can confound this calm self-trust with selfish indifference of temperament. . . . He never halts, never repines, never is puzzled, like other men; that tranquillity, full of life, that ceaseless but graceful motion, 'without haste, without rest,' for which we all are striving, he has attained. And is not his love of the noblest kind? Reverence the highest, have patience with the lowest. Let this day's performance of the meanest duty be thy religion. Are the stars too distant, pick up that pebble that lies at thy foot, and from it learn the all. Go out like Saul, the son of Kish, look earnestly after the meanest of thy father's goods, and a kingdom shall be brought thee. The least act of pure self-renunciation hallows, for the moment, all within its sphere. The philosopher may mislead, the devil tempt, yet innocence, though wounded and bleeding as it goes, must reach at last the holy city. The power

of sustaining himself and guiding others rewards man sufficiently for the longest apprenticeship. Is not this lore the noblest? . . . He was true, for he knew that nothing can be false to him who is true, and that to genius nature has pledged her protection." [1]

"The greatness of Goethe," she says, "his nation has felt for more than half a century; the world is beginning to feel it, but time may not yet have ripened his critic; especially as the *grand historical standing point* is the only one from which a comprehensive view could be taken of him." [2]

In thus concluding the preface to the Translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* she gives expression to the most important truth she found, in fact, the only criterion by which we may judge the real worth of any great man to his age, or to the world: the *historical* point of view. In arriving at this point of view, Margaret Fuller not only surpassed Carlyle, but also preceded by decades the contemporary critics of Goethe in Germany, who could not escape from the baleful influence of Hegel's Philosophy. And we may

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 20 ff.
[2] Preface to Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* xxii f.

not claim too much by saying that she was led to take this historical attitude by her thorough study of Goethe himself. There can be no doubt that had she been permitted to finish her proposed Life of Goethe, she would have written it in the true historical spirit, which her best criticisms of him breathe. Certainly, we can say with Frederick H. Hedge, one of her intimate friends and teachers, that what she did write of the great German poet, taken all in all, is "one of the best things she has written", and "is one of the best criticisms extant of Goethe." [1]

[1] *Memoirs*, I. p. 96.

Chapter V

INTERPRETATION, CRITICISM AND TRANSLATION OF GOETHE

Margaret Fuller was more than merely a diligent student of Goethe upon whose inner life his full power was brought to bear with wondrous effect. She was also an unusually clear-sighted critic and appreciative interpreter of his works—both from a philosophical and an artistic standpoint. The study of German in America during the fourth and fifth decades of the last century was still in its infancy. It is true there were a few men living in and about Cambridge and Boston at that time who understood Goethe, and were very fair interpreters of his works. But none of them comprehended or interpreted him nearly so well as Margaret Fuller did; nor were any so active and aggressive as she in disseminating German ideas and principles. Just such an influential and appreciative critic of German, as she, was much needed in America at the time. The slow progress

in the study of German writers here was partly due, at least, to the very fact that readers did not understand the true mission to humanity of these great thinkers, nor could they appreciate the beauty of their works.

Most of the misinterpretations and lack of appreciation of German works—and those of Goethe especially—were due, however, to a strong religious prejudice. Goethe came with a new evangel, and this evangel did not coincide with the Puritan religious ideal. Goethe came with his doctrine of "God-Nature," or to phrase it a little differently, "Sinnlich-Sittlich," in which he, as was stated in a preceding chapter, took cognizance of one aspect—the sensuous side—in the development of character, which had been neglected by Puritanism and the religious sects that had their origin in Puritanism, namely, the Unitarians and the Transcendentalists. Because of his inherited Puritan ideas the New Englander believed that this side of human nature was of the "Evil One." Naturally, therefore, Goethe was condemned as a Pagan, and his works as immoral; since much was found in them that pertained to the sensual nature. Margaret Fuller, as we have seen, had, to a high degree, freed herself from

these same Puritan ideas, and had received a full development of her whole nature and inner life through Goethe. She knew exactly how a New Englander felt, and could therefore, make Goethe's doctrine appeal to him better than a native-born German could do. Hence, nobody was better adapted to become Goethe's interpreter among her countrymen than she.

The work of Goethe that held the uppermost place in Margaret Fuller's estimation was, of course, *Faust,* that "work without a parallel," as she called it, "one of those few originals which have their laws within themselves, and should always be discussed singly." [1] Of this great drama she says in her second article on Goethe in the *Dial:* " 'Faust' contains the great idea of his [Goethe's] life, as indeed there is but one great poetic idea possible to man—the progress of a soul through the various forms of existence.[2]

"All his other works, whatever their miraculous beauty of execution, are mere chapters to this poem, illustrative of particular points. . . .[3]

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 133.
[2] See also Margaret Fuller's Translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* Introd. p. x.
[3] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 35.

"The fiercest passions are not so dangerous foes to the soul as the cold scepticism of the understanding. The Jewish demon assailed the man of Uz with physical ills, the Lucifer of the middle ages tempted his passions; but the Mephistopheles of the eighteenth century bade the finite strive to compass the infinite, and the intellect attempt to solve all the problems of the soul.

"This path Faust had taken: it is that of modern necromancy. Not willing to grow into God by a steady worship of a life, men would enforce his presence by a spell; not willing to learn his existence by the slow processes of their own, they strive to bind it in a word, that they may wear it about the neck as a talisman.

"Faust, bent on reaching the center of the universe through the intellect alone, naturally, after a length of trial, which has prevented the harmonious unfolding of his nature, falls into despair. He has striven for one object, and that object eludes him. Returning upon himself, he finds large tracts of his nature lying waste and cheerless. He is too noble for apathy, too wise for vulgar content with the animal enjoyments of life. Yet the thirst he has been so many years increasing is not to be borne. Give me, he cries,

but a drop of water to cool my burning tongue. Yet in casting himself with a wild recklessness upon the impulses of his nature yet untried, there is disbelief that any thing short of the All can satisfy the immortal spirit. His first attempt was noble, though mistaken, and under the saving influence of it, he makes the compact, whose condition cheats the fiend at last."

Margaret Fuller then quotes the eight lines from *Faust,* 1. 1694 ff., containing the compact which she thus translates rather freely:

> "Canst thou by falsehood or by flattery
> Make me one moment with myself at peace,
> Cheat me into tranquillity? Come then
> And welcome, life's last day.
> Make me but to the moment say,
> O fly not yet, thou art so fair,
> Then let me perish, etc."

"But this condition," she continues, "is never fulfilled. Faust cannot be content with sensuality, with the charlatanry of ambition, nor with riches." [1] "Faust became a wiser if not a nobler being." [2] "His heart never becomes callous, nor

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 36 ff.
[2] Ibid., p. 34.

his moral and intellectual perceptions obtuse. He is saved at last.

"With the progress of an individual soul is shadowed forth that of the soul of the age; beginning in intellectual scepticism; sinking into license; cheating itself with dreams of perfect bliss, to be at once attained by means no surer than a spurious paper currency; longing itself back from conflict between the spirit and the flesh, induced by Christianity, to the Greek era with its harmonious development of body and mind; striving to re-embody the loved phantom of classical beauty in the heroism of the middle age; flying from the Byron despair of those who die because they cannot soar without wings, to schemes however narrow, of practical utility,—redeemed at last through mercy alone." [1]

"The Seeker represents the Spirit of the Age. He [Faust] never sinned save by yielding, and yet he was emphatically *saved by grace*. It is difficult to see what Goethe meant until he got to the Tower of the Middle Ages. That made all clear." [2]

The character mentioned by Margaret Fuller

[1] *Life Without and Life Within*, pp. 37 f.
[2] *Margaret and Her Friends*, pp. 131 f.

again and again is Gretchen. Two short passages will suffice here to show how Margaret Fuller thought of this charming, unfortunate girl and how she interpreted her character. "Gretchen, in the golden cloud, is raised above all past delusions, worthy to redeem and upbear the wise man who stumbled into the pit of error while searching for truth." [1] "Gretchen, by her innocence of heart, and the resolute aversion to the powers of darkness, which her mind in its most shattered state, does not forget, redeems not only her own soul, but that of her erring lover." [2] *

Most interesting is Margaret Fuller's criticism of Mephistopheles. Hardly anything which has been said or written since characterizes better the demon within our inner nature and the various forms in which he has appeared to man, and the deep meaning underlying these several forms, than these two paragraphs:

"The demon of the man of Uz; the facetious familiar of Luther, cracking nuts on the bedposts, put to flight by hurling an ink-horn; the haughty Satan of Milton, whose force of will is a match for all but Omnipotence; the sorrowful

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 228.
[2] Preface to *Conversations with Goethe*, p. xiii.
* For further discussions of Gretchen, see below p. 209.

satire of Byron's temper; the cold polished irony of Goethe's Mephistopheles; all mark with admirable precision the state of the age and the mental position of the writer. Man tells his aspirations in his God; but in his demon he shows his depth of experience, and casts light into the cavern through which he worked his course up to the cheerful day."

". . . If we compare the Mephistopheles and Lucifer with the buskined devil of the mob, the goblin with the cloven foot and tail, we realize the vast development of inward life. What a step from slavish fears of injury or outward retribution to representations, like these, of inward dangers, the pitfalls and fearful dens within our nature, and he who thoughtfully sees the danger begins already to subdue." [1]

"The second part of Faust is full of meaning, resplendent with beauty; but it is rather an appendix to the first part than a fulfillment of its promise. The world, remembering the powerful stamp of individual feeling, universal indeed in its application, but individual in its life, which had conquered all its scruples in the first part, was vexed to find, instead of the man Faust, the

[1] *Dial,* Vol. III, p. 258.

spirit of the age,—discontented with the shadowy manifestation of truths it longed to embrace, and, above all, disappointed that the author no longer met us face to face, or riveted the ear by its deep tones of grief and resolve." [1]

In answer to this criticism so common among many of the readers of the second part of Faust, she says: "When the world shall have got rid of the still overpowering influence of the first part, it will be seen that the fundamental idea is never lost sight of in the second. The change is that Goethe, though the same thinker, is no longer the same person." [2]

"Goethe borrowed from the book of Job the grand thought of permitted temptation . . . [He] has shown the benefits of deepening individual consciousness . . . [and] left his unfinished leaves as they fell from his life. By leading a soul through various processes to final redemption, we are made to expect an indication of the steps through which man passes to spiritual purification." [3]

Wilhelm Meister, the work so little appreciated and so much abused in New England during Mar-

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 38.
[2] Ibid., p. 38.
[3] *Dial,* Vol. III, pp. 248 f.

garet Fuller's life, had a charm for her only second to that of *Faust*. Here, in this great work, she found Goethe's philosophy of the development of human character in its clearest outlines and most complete form. She looked at this work, therefore, as one of the greatest educational works that the world had ever produced.

"The continuation of Faust in the practical sense of the education of man," she says, "is to be found in Wilhelm Meister." [1] "Faust and Wilhelm Meister [are] so easily taken captive by the present. I admit the wisdom of this course, where, as in Wilhelm Meister, the aim is to suggest the various ways in which the whole nature may be educated through the experiences of this world." "Renunciation, the power of sacrificing the temporary for the permanent," she writes again, "is the leading idea in one of his great works, Wilhelm Meister." [2] This is the great doctrine which *Wilhelm Meister* had taught her and which she tried to impress upon others.

Continuing in the *Dial* the comparison between Faust and Wilhelm Meister, she says: "Here [in *Wilhelm Meister*] we see the change by strongest contrast. The main spring of action is

[1] *Life Without and Life Within*, p. 38.
[2] Preface to *Conversations with Goethe*, p. xiii.

no longer the impassioned and noble seeker [as in *Faust*], but a disciple of circumstance, whose most marked characteristic is a *taste* for virtue and knowledge. Wilhelm certainly prefers these conditions of existence to their opposites, but there is nothing so decided in his character as to prevent his turning a clear eye on every part of the variegated world-scene which the writer wished to place before us.

"To see all till he knows all sufficiently to put objects into their relations, then to concentrate his powers and use his knowledge under recognized conditions,—such is the progress of man from Apprentice to Master.

". . . 'Tis pity that the volumes of the Wanderjahre have not been translated entire, as well as those of the Lehrjahre, for many, who have read the latter only, fancy that Wilhelm becomes a master in that work. Far from it; he has but just become conscious of the higher powers that have ceaselessly been weaving his fate. Far from being as yet a Master, he but now begins to be a Knower. In the Wanderjahre we find him gradually learning the duties of citizenship, and hardening into manhood, by applying what he has learned for himself to the education of his child. He con-

verses on equal terms with the wise and beneficent; he is no longer duped and played with for his good, but met directly mind to mind.

"Wilhelm is a master when he can command his actions, yet keep his mind always open to new means of knowledge; when he has looked at various ways of living, various forms of religion and of character, till he has learned to be tolerant of all, discerning of good in all; when the astronomer imparts to his equal ear his highest thoughts, and the poor cottager seeks his aid as a patron and counsellor.

"To be capable of all duties, limited by none, with an open eye, a skilful and ready hand, an assured step, a mind deep, calm, foreseeing without anxiety, hopeful without the aid of illusion,—such is the ripe state of manhood. This attained, the great soul should still seek and labor, but strive and battle never more.

"The reason for Goethe's choosing so negative a character as Wilhelm, and leading him through scenes of vulgarity and low vice, would be obvious enough to a person of any depth of thought, even if he himself had not announced it. He thus obtained room to paint life as it really is, and bring forward those slides in the magic lantern

which are always known to exist, though they may not be spoken of to ears polite.

"Wilhelm cannot abide in tradition, nor do as his fathers did before him, merely for the sake of money or a standing in society. The stage, here an emblem of the ideal life as it gleams before unpractised eyes, offers, he fancies, opportunity for a life of thought as distinguished from one of routine. Here, no longer the simple citizen, but Man, all Men, he will rightly take upon himself the different aspects of life, till poet-wise, he shall have learned them all.

"No doubt the attraction of the stage to young persons of a vulgar character is merely the brilliancy of its trappings; but to Wilhelm, as to Goethe, it was this poetic freedom and daily suggestion which seemed likely to offer such an agreeable studio in the green room.

"But the ideal must be rooted in the real, else the poet's life degenerates into buffoonery or vice. Wilhelm finds the characters formed by this would-be ideal existence more despicable than those which grew up on the track, dusty and bustling and dull as it had seemed, of common life. He is prepared by disappointment for a higher ambition.

"In the house of the count he finds genuine elegance, genuine sentiment, but not sustained by wisdom, or a devotion to important objects. This love, this life, is also inadequate.

"Now, with Teresa he sees the blessings of domestic peace. He sees a mind sufficient for itself, finding employment and education in the perfect economy of a little world. The lesson is pertinent to the state of mind in which his former experiences have left him, as indeed our deepest lore is won from reaction. But a sudden change of scene introduces him to the society of the sage and learned uncle, the sage and beneficent Natalia. Here he finds the same virtues as with Teresa, and enlightened by a larger wisdom. . . .

"The Count of Thorane, a man of powerful character, who made a deep impression on his childhood, was, he says, 'reverenced by me as an uncle.' And the ideal wise man of this common life epic stands before us as 'The Uncle.'

"After seeing the working of just views in the establishment of the uncle, learning piety from the Confessions of a Beautiful Soul, and religious beneficence from the beautiful life of Natalia, Wilhelm is deemed worthy of admission to the

society of the Illuminati, that is, those who have pierced the secret of life, and know what it is to be and to do.

"Here he finds the scroll of his life 'drawn with large, sharp strokes,' that is, these truly wise read his character for him, and 'mind and destiny are but two names for one idea.'

"He now knows enough to enter on the Wanderjahre.

"Goethe always represents the highest principle in the feminine form. Woman is the Minerva, man the Mars. As in the Faust, the purity of Gretchen, resisting the demon always, even after all her faults, is announced to have saved her soul to heaven; and in the second part she appears, not only redeemed herself, but by her innocence and forgiving tenderness hallowed to redeem the being who had injured her.

"So in the Meister, these women hover around the narrative, each embodying the spirit of the scene. The frail Philina, graceful, though contemptible, represents the degradation incident to an attempt at leading an exclusively poetic life. Mignon, gift divine as ever the Muse bestowed on the passionate heart of man, with her soft, mysterious inspiration, her pining for perpetual youth,

represents the high desire that leads to this mistake, as Aurelia, the desire for excitement; Teresa, practical wisdom, gentle tranquillity, which seem most desirable after the Aurelia glare. Of the beautiful soul and Natalia we have already spoken. The former embodies what was suggested to Goethe by the most spiritual person he knew in youth—Mademoiselle von Klettenberg, over whom, as he said, in her invalid loneliness the Holy Ghost brooded like a dove.

"Entering on the Wanderjahre, Wilhelm becomes acquainted with another woman, who seems the complement of all the former, and represents the idea which is to guide and mould him in the realization of all the past experience.

"This person, long before we see her, is announced in various ways as a ruling power. She is the last hope in cases of difficulty, and, though an invalid, and living in absolute retirement, is consulted by her connections and acquaintances as an unerring judge in all their affairs.

"All things tend toward her as a center; she knows all, governs all, but never goes forth from herself.

"Wilhelm at last visits her. He finds her infirm in body, but equal to all she has to do. Charity

and counsel to men who need her are her business, astronomy her pleasure.

"After a while, Wilhelm ascertains from the Astronomer, her companion, what he had before suspected, that she really belongs to the solar system, and only appears on earth to give men a feeling of the planetary harmony. From her youth up, says the Astronomer, till she knew me, though all recognized in her an unfolding of the highest moral and intellectual qualities, she was supposed to be sick at her times of clear vision. When her thoughts were not in the heavens, she returned and acted in obedience to them on earth; she was then said to be well.

"When the Astronomer had observed her long enough, he confirmed her inward consciousness of a separate existence and peculiar union with the heavenly bodies.

"Her picture is painted with many delicate traits, and a gradual preparation leads the reader to acknowledge the truth; but, even in the slight indication here given, who does not recognize thee, divine Philosophy, sure as the planetary orbits, and inexhaustible as the fountain of light, crowning the faithful seeker at last with the privilege to possess his own soul.

"In all that is said of Macaria, we recognize that no thought is too religious for the mind of Goethe. It was indeed so." [1] "His two highest female characters, Natalia and Macaria, are representations of beneficence and heavenly wisdom." [2]

"Wilhelm, at the school of the Three Reverences, thinks out what can be done for man in his temporal relations. He learns to practice moderation, and even painful renunciation. The book ends, simply indicating what the course of his life will be, by making him perform an act of kindness, with good judgment and at the right moment.

"Surely the simple soberness of Goethe should please at least those who style themselves, pre-eminently, people of common sense." [3]

Margaret Fuller is correct in saying that in *Werther* we have an expression of a part of Goethe's own feelings, an epoch in his development. Werther expresses truthfully certain phases through which the great poet himself passed in his growth as an individual and a genius.

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 38 ff.
[2] Translation of *Conversations with Goethe,* Preface, p. xiv.
[3] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 43.

"He was driven," Margaret Fuller writes in describing the personal experiences and disappointments through which Goethe passed previous to writing this work, "from the severity of study into the world, and then again drawn back, many times in the course of his crowded youth. Both the world and the study he used with unceasing ardor. . . . He was very social, and continually perturbed by his social sympathies. He was deficient both in outward self-possession and mental self-trust [quoting Goethe's own words] 'either *too volatile or too infatuated*'." Herder's and Merck's influences, she said, were also brought to bear on him, and not always in a manner to cheer the young poet or give him confidence in his own productions. "His youth," she continues, "was as sympathetic and impetuous as any on record."

"The effect of all this outward pressure on the poet is recorded in Werther—a production that he afterwards undervalued, and to which he even felt positive aversion. It was natural that this should be. In the calm air of the cultivated plain he attained, the remembrance of the miasma of sentimentality was odious to him. Yet sentimentality is but sentiment diseased, which to be cured must be patiently observed by the wise

physician; so are the morbid desire and despair of Werther, the sickness of a soul aspiring to a purer, freer state, but mistaking the way." [1] "Werther . . . must die because life was not wide enough and rich enough in love for him." [2]

"The best or the worst occasion in man's life is precisely that misused in Werther, when he longs for more love, more freedom, and a larger development of genius than the limitations of this terrene sphere permit. Sad is it indeed if, persisting to grasp too much at once, he lose all, as Werther did. He must accept limitation, must consent to do his work in time, must let his affections be baffled by the barriers of convention. Tantalus-like, he makes this world a Tartarus, or, like Hercules, rises in fires to heaven, according as he knows how to interpret his lot. But he must only use, not adopt it. The boundaries of the man must never be confounded with the destiny of the soul. If he does not decline his destiny, as Werther did, it is his honor to have felt its unfitness for his eternal scope. He was born for wings; he is held to walk in leading-strings; nothing lower than faith must make him resigned, and only in hope should he find content—a hope

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 29 f.
[2] Ibid., p. 34.

not of some slight improvement in his own condition or that of other men, but a hope justified by the divine justice, which is bound in due time to satisfy every want of his nature.

"Schiller's great command is, 'Keep true to the dream of thy youth'. The great problem is how to make the dream real, through the exercise of the waking will.

"This was not exactly the problem Goethe tried to solve. To *do* somewhat, became too important. . . . It is not the knowledge of what *might be,* but what *is,* that forms us."

"Werther . . . is characterized by a fervid eloquence of Italian glow, which betrays a part of his character almost lost sight of in the quiet transparency of his later productions, and may give us some idea of the mental conflicts through which he passed to manhood.

"The acting out the mystery into life, the calmness of survey, and the passionateness of feeling, above all the ironical baffling at the end, and want of point to a tale got up with such an eye to effect as he goes along, mark well the man that was to be. Even so did he demand in Werther; even so resolutely open the door in the first part of Faust; even so seem to play with himself and

his contemporaries in the second part of Faust and Wilhelm Meister.

"Yet was he deeply earnest in his play, not for men, but for himself. To himself as a part of nature it was important to grow, to lift his head to the light. In nature he had all confidence; for man, as a part of nature, infinite hope; but in him as an individual will, seemingly, not much trust at the earliest age." [1]

So deeply interested was Margaret Fuller in Goethe's *Tasso* that she translated it into English verse. "In Tasso," she writes, "Goethe has described the position of the poetical mind in its prose relations." It is, she believes, another confession or expression of what Goethe, as a poet, felt himself.[2]

"Goethe had not from nature that character of self-reliance and self-control in which he so long appeared to the world. It was wholly acquired, and so highly valued because he was conscious of the opposite tendency. He was by nature as impetuous, though not as tender, as Tasso, and the disadvantage at which this constantly placed him was keenly felt by a mind made to appreciate

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 29 ff.
[2] Ibid., p. 28.

the subtlest harmonies in all relations. Therefore was it that when he at last cast anchor, he was so reluctant again to trust himself to wave and breeze." [1]

Of the harrowing feelings that must rend a sympathetic and tender poetic heart, like that of Tasso, Margaret Fuller says: "Let me add as the best criticism, for the hearing of those that will hear, one of those matchless scenes in which Goethe represents the sudden blazes of eloquence, the fitful shadings of mood, and the exquisite sensitiveness to all influences that made the weakness and the power of Tasso. It also presents the relation that probably existed between the princess and the poet, with more truth than their confessors could discern it, for the poet is the only priest in the secrets of the heart." [2]

Margaret Fuller, to give us an adequate idea of the beauty and feeling of the play, or rather to let the play speak for itself in these matters, quotes, in her article on Goethe in the *Dial,* two scenes (Act II, Scenes 1 and 2) from her own translation of *Tasso.* In these two scenes Tasso gives vent to the deepest poetic feelings that arise from the conflicts between his idealistic, poetic inner

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 28 f. [2] *Dial,* January, 1842.

nature, and the unfeeling, realistic world outside; and finally, based upon the encouraging words of the Princess, he ends in the second scene with the most glowing hopes and ecstacy of soul, a complete abandonment to his poetic feelings.

The sufferings of Tasso always appealed deeply to Margaret Fuller, and she writes: "Beethoven! Tasso! It is well to think of you! What sufferings from baseness, from coldness! How rare and momentary were the flashes of joy, of confidence and tenderness, in these noblest lives! Yet could not their genius be repressed. The Eternal Justice lives. O Father, teach the spirit the meaning of sorrow, and light up the generous fires of love and hope and faith." [1]

It is "a novelty," Margaret Fuller believes, "to see the mind of a poet analysed and portrayed by another, who, however, shared the inspiration only of his subject, saved from his weakness by that superb balance of character in which Goethe surpasses even Milton." This "very celebrated production of the first German writer" with its "beautiful finish of style" she calls a "many-toned lyre on which the poet originally melodized his inspired conceptions." "The central situation of

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 105.

Tasso," she says, in conclusion, is "the manner in which his companions draw him out, and are in turn drawn out by him, the mingled generosity and worldliness of the Realist Antonio, the mixture of taste, feeling, and unconscious selfishness in Alphonso, the more delicate, but not less decided painting of the two Leonoras, the gradual but irresistible force by which the catastrophe is drawn down upon us, concur to make this drama a model of Art, that art which Goethe worshipped ever after he had exhaled his mental boyhood in Werther." [1]

Of *Egmont* and *Goetz von Berlichingen* Margaret Fuller also speaks, calling the former "the generous free liver," [2] and finding in the latter a striking and beautiful picture of ideal home relations between husband and wife, "that community of inward life, that perfect esteem," which enables Goetz von Berlichingen to say " 'Whom God loves, to him gives He such a wife'." [3]

The *Elective Affinities* and *Iphigenie* were to Margaret Fuller the "two surpassingly beautiful works" of Goethe. For these she expresses the

[1] *Art, Literature and the Drama,* pp. 355 f.
[2] *Life Without and Life Within,* p. 60.
[3] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 80.

greatest praise and most glowing admiration. In them "is shown most distinctly," she says, "the clear perception which was in Goethe's better nature, of the beauty of that steadfastness, of that singleness and simple melody of soul, which he too much sacrificed to become 'the many-sided One'."

What a storm of bitter criticism and protest was hurled against the first of these works by those who held to Puritan traditions, and consequently rejected everything that in any way pertained to the sensuous nature, is seen from Margaret Fuller's own criticism of these works. She was practically alone in her large circle in seeing the true meaning and higher beauty of this charming work. How great must have been her influence in correcting the mistaken idea current concerning this work, and in saving it from the bad reputation that had been given it. In her enthusiasm she justly called it "Moral" and "Religious even to piety in its spirit."

"Not Werther," she says, "not the Nouvelle Héloise, have been assailed with such a storm of indignation as the first-named of these works, on the score of gross immorality.

"The reason probably is the subject; any discus-

sion of the validity of the marriage vow making society tremble to its foundation; and, secondly, the cold manner in which it is done. All that is in the book would be bearable to most minds if the writer had had less the air of a spectator, and had larded his work here and there with ejaculations of horror and surprise.

"These declarations of sentiment on the part of the author seem to be required by the majority of readers, in order to an interpretation of his purpose, as sixthly, seventhly, and eighthly were, in an old fashioned sermon, to rouse the audience to a perception of the method made use of by the preacher.

"But it has always seemed to me that those who need not such helps to their discriminating faculties, but read a work so thoroughly as to apprehend its whole scope and tendency, rather than hear what the author says it means, will regard the Elective Affinities as a work especially what is called moral in its outward effect, and religious even to piety in its spirit. The mental aberrations of the consorts from their plighted faith, though in one case never indulged, and though in the other no veil of sophistry is cast over the weakness of passion, but all that is felt expressed with the

openness of one who desires to legitimate what he feels, are punished by terrible griefs and a fatal catastrophe. Ottilia, that being of exquisite purity, with intellect and character so harmonized in feminine beauty, as they never before were found in any portrait of woman painted by the hand of man, perishes, on finding she has been breathed on by unhallowed passion, and led to err even by her ignorant wishes against what is held sacred." [1] "The virgin Ottilia . . . immolates herself to avoid the possibility of spotting her thoughts with passion." [2]

"It pains me," she says in a letter, "to part with Ottilia. I wish we could learn books, as we do pieces of music, and repeat them, in the author's order, when taking a solitary walk. But, now, if I set out with an Ottilia, this wicked fairy association conjures up such crowds of less lovely companions, that I often cease to feel the influence of the elect one." [3]

"I am thinking," she writes again, to a ministerial friend, "how I omitted to talk a volume to you about the 'Elective Affinities.' Now I shall never say half of it, for which I, on my own ac-

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 48 f.
[2] *Conversations with Goethe,* Introd., p. xiv.
[3] *Memoirs,* I. 117.

count, am sorry. . . . I am now going to dream of your sermon, and of Ottilia's china-asters." [1]

"The only personage whom we do not pity is Edward, for he is the only one who stifles the voice of conscience.

"There is indeed a sadness, as of an irresistible fatality, brooding over the whole. It seems as if only a ray of angelic truth could have enabled these men to walk wisely in this twilight, at first so soft and alluring, then deepening into blind horror.

"But if no such ray came to prevent their earthly errors, it seems to point heavenward in the saintly sweetness of Ottilia. Her nature, too fair for vice, too finely wrought even for error, comes lonely, intense, and pale, like the evening star on the cold, wintry night. It tells of other worlds, where the meaning of such strange passages as this must be read to those faithful and pure like her, victims perishing in the green garlands of a spotless youth to atone for the unworthiness of others.

"An unspeakable pathos is felt from the minutest trait of this character, and deepens with every new study of it. Not even in Shakespeare have

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 118.

I so felt the organizing power of genius. Through dead words I find the least gestures of this person, stamping themselves on my memory, betraying to the heart the secret of her life, which she herself, like all these divine beings, knew not. I feel myself familiarized with all beings of her order. I see not only what she was, but what she might have been, and live with her in yet untrodden realms.

"Here is the glorious privilege of a form known only in the world of genius. There is on it no stain of usage or calculation to dull our sense of its immeasurable life. What in our daily walk, mid common faces and common places, fleets across us at moments from glances of the eye, or tones of the voice, is felt from the whole being of one of these children of genius.

"This precious gem is set in a ring complete in its enamel. I cannot hope to express my sense of the beauty of this book as a work of art. I would not attempt it if I had elsewhere met any testimony to the same. The perfect picture, always before the mind, of the chateau, the moss hut, the park, the garden, the lake, with its boat and the landing beneath the platan trees; the gradual manner in which both localities and per-

sons grow upon us, more living than life, inasmuch as we are, unconsciously, kept at our best temperature by the atmosphere of genius, and thereby more delicate in our perceptions than amid our customary fogs; the gentle unfolding of the central thought, as a flower in the morning sun; then the conclusion, rising like a cloud, first soft and white, but darkening as it comes, till with a sudden wind it bursts above our heads; the ease with which we everywhere find points of view all different, yet all bearing on the same circle, for though we feel every hour new worlds, still before our eye lie the same objects, new, yet the same unchangeable, yet always changing their aspects as we proceed, till at last we find we ourselves have transferred the circle, and know all we overlooked at first,—these things are worthy of our highest admiration.

"For myself, I never felt so completely that very thing which genius should always make us feel—that I was in its circle, and could not get out till its spell was done, and its last spirit permitted to depart. I was not carried away, instructed, delighted more than by other works, but I was *there,* living there, whether as the platan tree, or the architect, or any other observing part

of the scene. The personages live too intensely to let us live in them; they draw around themselves circles within the circle; we can only see them close, not be themselves.

"Others, it would seem, on closing the book, exclaim, 'What an immoral book!' I well remember my own thought, 'It is a work of art!' At last I understood that world within a world, that ripest fruit of human nature, which is called art. With each perusal of the book my surprise and delight at this wonderful fulfillment of design grew." [1]

Iphigenie, Margaret Fuller calls, "a work beyond the possibility of negation; a work where a religious meaning not only pierces but enfolds the whole; a work as admirable in art, still higher in significance, more single in expression [2] [than the *Elective Affinities*]."

Since this drama was not well known in America, Margaret Fuller gives an outline of it and translates some of the most beautiful passages into English, yet how far short any outline or criticism falls in giving the reader an idea of the beauties of this admirable play, Margaret Fuller

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 49 ff.
[2] Ibid., p. 51.

herself felt. "These are the words and thoughts," she says, "but how give an idea of the sweet simplicity of expression in the original, where every word has the grace and softness of a flower petal?" [1]

Iphigenie tells the story of her race "in a way that makes us feel as if that most famous tragedy had never before found a voice, so simple, so fresh in its naïveté is the recital." The first two acts contain "scenes of the most delicate workmanship. . . . between the light-hearted Pylades, full of worldly resource and ready tenderness, and the suffering Orestes, of far nobler, indeed heroic nature, but less fit for the day and more for the ages . . . The characters of both are brought out with great skill, and the nature of the bond between 'the butterfly and the dark flower,' distinctly shown in few words . . .

"The scenes go on more and more full of breathing beauty. The lovely joy of Iphigenie, the meditative softness with which the religiously educated mind perpetually draws the inference from the most agitating events, impress us more and more. At last the hour of trial comes . . .

"But, O, the step before all this can be

[1] *Life Without and Life Within*, p. 53.

obtained;—to deceive Thoas, a savage and a tyrant indeed, but long her protector,—in his barbarous fashion, her benefactor! How can she buy life, happiness, or even the safety of those dear ones at such a price? . . .

"Then follows the sublime song of the Parcæ, well known through translations. But Iphigenie is not a victim of fate, for she listens steadfastly to the god in her breast. Her lips are incapable of subterfuge. She obeys her own heart, tells all to the king, calls up his better nature, wins, hallows, and purifies all around her, till the heaven-prepared way is cleared by the obedient child of heaven, and the great trespass of Tantalus cancelled by a woman's reliance on the voice of her innocent soul." [1] "Iphigenie, by her steadfast truth, hallows all about her, and disarms the powers of hell." [2]

But most powerfully and charmingly interpreted are Goethe's feminine characters in Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, which contains her masterly argument and plea for a higher, freer womanhood. These charming portraits are left, for the most part, in

[1] *Life Without and Life Within*, pp. 53 ff.
[2] Preface to *Conversations with Goethe*, p. xiv.

just the order and setting in which they stand in the work mentioned above; for thus they appear in the best light, and exactly as Margaret Fuller presented them to her readers.

"Goethe, proceeding on his own track," she writes, "elevating the human being, in the most imperfect states of society, by continual efforts at self-culture, takes as good care of women as of men. His mother, the bold, gay Frau Aja, with such playful freedom of nature; the wise and gentle maiden, known in his youth, over whose sickly solitude 'the Holy Ghost brooded as a dove;' his sister, the intellectual woman *par excellence,*" all lent him traits of character for his ideals of womanhood. The same, she thought, was true of Goethe's patroness. "In this country [America]," she writes, "is venerated, wherever seen, the character which Goethe spoke of as an Ideal, which he saw actualized in his friend and patroness, the Grand Duchess Amalia: 'The excellent woman is she, who, if the husband dies, can be father to the children.' And this if read aright, tells a great deal." [1] "Lili," Margaret Fuller says, "combined the character of the woman of the world with the lyrical sweetness

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century,* p. 110.

of the shepherdess, on whose chaste and noble breast flowers and gems were equally at home. All these had supplied abundant suggestions to his [Goethe's] mind, as to the wants and possible excellencies of Woman. And from his poetic soul grew up forms new and more admirable than life has yet produced, for whom his clear eye marked out paths in the future.

"In Faust Margaret represents the redeeming power, which, at present upholds woman, while waiting for a better day. The lovely little girl, pure in instinct, ignorant in mind, is misled and profaned by man abusing her confidence. To the Mater *Dolorosa* she appeals for aid. It is given to the soul, if not against outward sorrow; and the maiden, enlightened by her sufferings, refusing to receive temporal salvation by the aid of an evil power, obtains the eternal in its stead.

"In the second part, the intellectual man, after all his manifold strivings, owes to the interposition of her whom he had betrayed, *his* salvation. She intercedes, this time, herself a glorified spirit, with the Mater Gloriosa. Leonora, too, is Woman, as we see her now, pure, thoughtful, refined by much acquaintance with grief." [1]

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 125 f.

"Iphigenie he speaks of in his journals as his 'daughter,' and she is the daughter whom a man will wish, even if he has chosen his wife from very mean motives. She is the virgin, steadfast soul, to whom falsehood is more dreadful than any other death." Elsewhere Iphigenie is praised as "a tender virgin, ennobled and strengthened by sentiment more than intellect; what they call a woman par excellence." [1]

"As Wilhelm [Meister] advances into the upward path, he becomes acquainted with better forms of Woman, by knowing how to seek, and how to prize them when found. For the weak and immature man will often admire a superior woman, but he will not be able to abide by a feeling which is too severe a tax on his habitual existence. But, with Wilhelm, the gradation is natural, and expresses ascent in the scale of being. At first, he finds charm in Mariana and Philina, very common forms of feminine character, not without redeeming traits, no less than charms, but without wisdom or purity. Soon he is attended by Mignon, the finest expression ever yet given to what I have called the lyrical element in Woman. She is a child, but too full grown for

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 422.

this man; he loves, but cannot follow her; yet is the association not without an enduring influence. Poesy has been domesticated in his life; and, though he strives to bind down her heavenward impulse, as art or apothegm, these are only the tents, beneath which he may sojourn for a while, but which may be easily struck, and carried on limitless wanderings." [1]

Margaret Fuller looked upon Mignon as a type of "the electrical, inspired, lyrical nature," the "prophetic form" of woman "expressive of the longing for a state of perfect freedom, pure love;" a representative of that type of beings, half angelic, whose affections are so pure that they are capable of a friendship where selfishness and sex play no part whatever; beings characterized by the song which Mignon sings shortly before her death, and which Margaret quotes in this connection.

"Jene himmlischen Gestalten
Sie fragen nicht nach Mann und Weib,
Und keine Kleider, keine Falten
Umgeben den verklärten Leib."*

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 127.

* Yonder heavenly forms
They ask not whether one be man or woman,
And no garments, no folds
Enclose the transfigured body.

"She could not remain here, but was translated to another air," Margaret Fuller continues. "And it may be that the air of this earth will never be so tempered that such can bear it long. But, while they stay they must bear testimony to the truth they are constituted to demand. That an era approaches which shall approximate nearer to such a temper than any has yet done, there are many tokens." [1]

"Advancing into the region of thought, he [Wilhelm Meister] encounters a wise philanthropy in Natalia (instructed, let us observe, by an *uncle*); practical judgment and the outward economy of life in Theresa; pure devotion in the Fair Saint.

"Further, and last, he comes to the house of Macaria, the soul of a star; that is, a pure and perfected intelligence embodied in feminine form, and the center of a world whose members revolve harmoniously around her. She instructs him in the archives of a rich human history, and introduces him to the contemplation of the heavens.

"From the hours passed by the side of Mariana to these with Macaria, is a wide distance for human feet to traverse. Nor has Wilhelm

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 64.

traveled so far, seen and suffered so much, in vain. He now begins to study how he may aid the next generation; he sees objects in harmonious arrangement, and from his observations deduces precepts by which to guide his course as a teacher and a master, 'help-full, comfort-full' . . .

"In the Macaria, bound with the heavenly bodies in fixed revolutions, the center of all relations, herself unrelated, he expresses the Minerva side of feminine nature. It was not by chance that Goethe gave her this name. Macaria, the daughter of Hercules, who offered herself as a victim for the good of her country, was canonized by the Greeks, and worshipped as the Goddess of true Felicity. Goethe has embodied this Felicity as the serenity that arises from Wisdom, a wisdom such as the Jewish wise man venerated, alike instructed in the designs of heaven, and the methods necessary to carry them into effect upon earth . . .

"All these women, though we see them in relations, we can think of as unrelated. They all are very individual, yet seem nowhere restrained. They satisfy for the present, yet arouse an infinite expectation.

"The economist Theresa, the benevolent Na-

talia, the Fair Saint, have chosen a path, but their thoughts are not narrowed to it. The functions of life to them are not ends, but suggestions.

"Thus, to them, all things are important, because none is necessary. Their different characters have fair play, and each is beautiful in its minute indications, for nothing is enforced or conventional; but everything, however slight, grows from the essential life of the being.

"Mignon and Theresa wear male attire when they like, and it is graceful for them to do so, while Macaria is confined to her arm-chair behind the green curtain, and the Fair Saint could not bear a speck of dust on her robe.

"All things are in their places in this little world, because all is natural and free, just as 'there is room for everything out of doors.' Yet all is rounded in by natural harmony, which will always arise where Truth and Love are sought in the light of Freedom." [1]

The very fact that Margaret Fuller takes over from Goethe, in one of her most important and influential books, this succession of female characters as representatives of the highest ideals of womanhood, ideals which she wished her Ameri-

[1] *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, pp. 127 ff.

can sisters to make real in our country,—all this is proof that she looked upon Goethe, not merely as a great poet-artist, who entertains and delights us, but as an ethical leader, whose doctrines of life and whose ideal types of character,—types created by the poet himself—are to be lived out in every day life. She was probably the first American-born person who saw the great world-poet in this light and thus understood his great mission to humanity.

Of Goethe's shorter works Margaret Fuller translates the poem *Entsagung*, and expresses through it her own renunciation. But especially did she admire Goethe's fragment *Prometheus*. She mentions this poem in several of her works, and translated it in 1838 for a friend. Prometheus, she thought, inspired us, more than anything else, with the courage of a truly liberated soul, and with an independence and a passionate desire to be a benefit to all humanity,[1] even at the cost of suffering and sacrifice,—inspired us, in fact, with traits just such as this ancient hero, so well described by Goethe, had before us. It also expressed, she says, an idea of how man might become a creator, like God.

[1] *Memoirs*, I. p. 310.

Margaret Fuller's feeling with reference to Goethe's poetry has already been mentioned. It seemed to her that Goethe's mind had embraced the universe. "I am enchanted," she says, "while I read. He comprehends every feeling I have ever had so perfectly, expresses it so beautifully." [1]

Much of the enthusiasm she felt for Goethe, and German in general, she undoubtedly imparted to the members of her circle of distinguished friends. They must have accepted to a large extent her interpretations; for there seems to have been a great change in sentiment among them toward Goethe, in fact, toward all German writers.

TRANSLATIONS FROM GOETHE

One of the results of Margaret Fuller's study of German was the translation of German works into English. These are, with the exception of a few short poems, either from Goethe's works directly, or from works that bear directly or indirectly on some phase of his life, and were, no doubt, inspired by her admiration for the great

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 119.

German poet. Her first translation in point of time is Goethe's *Tasso*. This work she must have translated and given its present metrical form as early as 1834, only two years after she began her study of German; for in a letter to Rev. F. H. Hedge, Nov. 30, 1834, she expresses her intention to print it. She failed, however, to find a publisher, and it did not appear in print until after her death [in 1859], when her brother, Arthur B. Fuller, included it in a volume of her works, entitled *Art, Literature and the Drama,* with a number of other papers by Margaret Fuller, previously published [1846] under the title *Papers on Literature and Art.*

Significant it is that this drama appealed to Margaret Fuller so strongly. It is proof of the extraordinary charm that *Tasso,* this "gem," this "perfect work of art," as she calls it, must have had for her.

The quality of the translation as such could no doubt be improved here and there. The original text is not always followed closely in the translation, and the lines are often lengthened or broken. The meter also would bear improvement. Yet, on the other hand, these faults are in some respects more than balanced by positive merits.

One of the most difficult tasks in translating, poetry especially, is to find idioms in the language into which a work is translated, that correspond exactly to those of the original and that convey the same meaning and force. Margaret Fuller has been remarkably successful in this respect. Like Coleridge, in his translations, she "deemed the rendering of the spirit, on the whole, more desirable than that of the letter." [1] Her translation is expressed in good idiomatic English and has all the qualities of an original composition. "The exact transmission of thought", she writes, "seems to me the one important thing in a translation; if grace and purity of style come of themselves, it is so much gained. In translating, I throw myself, as entirely as possible, into the mood of the writer, and make use of such expressions as would come naturally, if reading the work aloud in English. The style thus formed is at least a transcript of the feelings excited by the original." [2] For the reader, therefore, it has a native flavor and a beauty and charm far superior to many translations from foreign authors in which the translator stuck closer to the text of

[1] *Art, Literature and the Drama,* p. 355.
[2] *Correspondence of Fräulein Günderode and Bettine von Arnim,* Preface, p. vi.

the original, and was compelled, for that reason, to sacrifice beauty of expression and purity of idiom.

Margaret Fuller's preface to her translation of *Tasso* is interesting. In it she reveals the fine perception and feeling for language which she had, and expresses for Goethe, and the qualities of the drama which she here translated, the most enthusiastic praise.

"There are difficulties attending the translation of German works into English which might baffle one much more skilful in the use of the latter than myself. A great variety of compound words enables the German writer to give a degree of precision and delicacy of shading to his expressions nearly impracticable with the terse, the dignified, but by no means flexible English idiom. The rapid growth of German literature, the concurrence of so many master spirits, all at once fashioning the language into a medium for the communication of their thoughts, has brought it to a perfection which must gradually be impaired, as inferior minds mould and adapt it to their less noble uses." The German, she says, has a "condensed power of expression" which the English has lost. "It is more difficult," too, she finds, "to

polish a translation than an original work, since we are denied the liberty of retrenching or adding where the ear and the taste cannot be satisfied." But in spite of all the faults which her translation may have, she believes "that no setting can utterly mar the lustre of such a gem [as the original], or make this perfect work of art unwelcome to the meditative few, or even to the tasteful many. . . . The harmony with which the plot is developed, the nicely-adjusted contrasts between the characters, the beauty of composition, worthy the genius of ancient statuary, must still be perceptible." * [1]

In 1839 Margaret Fuller translated the first two volumes of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe.* This translation was published during the same year by George Ripley as the fourth volume of a series entitled *Specimens of Foreign Literature,* and formed, according to Emerson's account, the basis of the translation of Eckermann since published in London by Mr. Oxenford.[2]

As Margaret Fuller, herself, states in the

* It is my intention in the near future to write a criticism of Margaret Fuller's translation of Goethe's *Tasso,* analyzing and comparing it carefully with the original.

[1] *Art, Literature and the Drama,* pp. 355 f.

[2] *Memoirs,* I. p. 243.

preface to this work, she compressed or curtailed the two German volumes known to her into one in English, omitting the accounts of Goethe's experiments and theories of colors, for the *Farbenlehre* would arouse little interest here. Besides, she writes: "I was glad to dispense with them [the experiments and theories of color mentioned above] because I have no clear understanding of the subject, and could not have been secure of doing them justice." [1]

She left out also Eckermann's meager account of a journey to Italy, and here and there condensed Eckermann's remarks; but only in a few rare instances Goethe's. Of the whole work she writes:

"I have done it with such care, that I feel confident the substance of the work, and its essential features, will be found here . . . These two rules have been observed,—not to omit even such details as snuffing the candles and walking to the stove (given by the good Eckermann with that truly German minuteness . . .) when they seem needed to finish out the picture, either of German manners, or Goethe's relations to his

[1] *Conversations with Goethe,* Preface, p. xxv.

friends or household." [1] The preface also contains an unusually good criticism of Goethe (if we except one or two statements) which has already been quoted at length in the preceding pages. Besides this, there is also a very just characterization of Eckermann and his relations to Goethe.

The book more than gratified the highest hopes that the translator had dared to express for it in her preface, in which, as Mr. Higginson has said, she "underrates instead of overstating the value of her own work." "She made a delightful book of it," Mr. Higginson continues, "and one which . . . helped to make the poet a familiar personality to English-speaking readers. For one, I can say that it brought him nearer to me than any other book, before or since, has ever done." She probably got no compensation for it, according to Mr. Higginson, "beyond the good practice for herself and the gratitude of others." [2] She undoubtedly had still another aim in publishing this work, perhaps the chief aim, namely, to make her Goethe better known among her countrymen, as the preface clearly indicates throughout. It doubtless was a great satisfaction for her to see

[1] Preface to Translation of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe,* p. xxv.
[2] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* pp. 189 f.

him growing in favor as a result of this effort on her part.

In the language and expression of this translation Margaret Fuller follows much more closely the text of the original than she did in *Tasso,* as might naturally be expected in the translation of a prose work, where one is not troubled so much with the form. Though part of the translation was dictated while she was ill and did not satisfy her as well as that which she wrote with her own hand, nevertheless, none of it is slavishly done. It is executed in much the same spirit as the former work, and has all the force and beauty of original composition. "I have a confidence", she says, "that the translation is, in the truest sense, faithful, and trust that those who find the form living and symmetrical, will not be inclined severely to censure some change in the cut or make of the garment in which it is arrayed." [1]

It is very much to be regretted that Margaret Fuller never finished her *Life of Goethe,* for which she had gathered so much material from original sources, and according to Emerson, left heaps of manuscript. Doubtless with her insight

[1] *Conversations with Goethe,* Preface, p. xxvi.

into the great poet's life and character and her unusual ability to comprehend him in what he said, she would have produced a work that would have done credit to her country. All that we know of her proposed work is from references in her letters.

The first reference is in an undated letter in which she says while meditating on the life of Goethe: "I thought I must get some idea of the history of philosophical opinion in Germany, that I might be able to judge of the influences it exercised upon his mind. I think I can comprehend him every other way, and probably interpret him satisfactorily to others,—if I can get the proper materials." [1] Again she writes to Emerson in 1836, after she had apparently studied much and hard on the subject of her proposed work, and succeeded in arousing her mind to a great activity. "Am I, can I make myself fit to write an account of half a century of the existence of one of the master spirits of this world?" "I am shocked to perceive you think I am *writing* the life of Goethe. No, indeed! I shall need a great deal of preparation before I shall have it clear in my head. I have taken a great many

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 127.

notes; but I shall not begin to write it, till it all lies mapped out before me. I have no material for ten years of his life." [1]

Emerson, thinking perhaps Carlyle might be able to help Margaret Fuller to secure the needed books on Goethe's life, writes to him in September of the same year: "A friend of mine who studies his (Goethe's) life with care would gladly know what records there are of his first ten years after his settlement at Weimar . . ." Carlyle answers: "As to Goethe and your friend; I know not anything out of Goethe's own works (which have many notices in them) that treats specially of those ten years." Carlyle, however, names a list of references that might lead to the proper sources.[2]

The next year (1837) Margaret Fuller again writes: "As you imagine, the Life of Goethe is not yet written; but I have studied and thought about it much. It grows in my mind with everything that does grow there. My friends in Europe have sent me the needed books on the subject, and I am now beginning to work in good earnest . . . I may find myself incompetent; but I go on in hope, secure, at all events, that it

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 128 f.
[2] *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence*, V., I. 100, 109.

will be the means of the highest culture."[1] A little later in the same year she writes: "Mr. Ripley,—who is about publishing a series of works on Foreign Literature,—has invited me to prepare the 'Life of Goethe,' on very advantageous terms."[2] And in the first volume of the series spoken of is announced "A Life of Goethe in preparation for this work, from original documents."[3]

Margaret Fuller's family, however, needed aid, and she "reluctantly gave up" this "congenial, literary project," and accepted an offer to teach in the schools of Providence.[4] "She spent much time on it," Emerson writes, "and has left heaps of manuscripts which are notes, transcripts and studies in that direction. But she wanted leisure and health to finish it."[5] The only published writings of Margaret Fuller, by which we may judge what the qualities of her *Life of Goethe* would have been, is her article on Goethe in the *Dial,* which, as Emerson says, "is, on many accounts, her best paper."

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 175.
[2] Ibid., p. 177.
[3] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* p. 189.
[4] *Memoirs,* I. 177.
[5] Ibid., pp. 243 f.

Bettine von Arnim's connection with Goethe was, without doubt, what first attracted Margaret Fuller's attention and interest to her. In common with many of her Boston circle, Margaret Fuller was much charmed with the letters that passed between the wise and elderly poet and the charming, fairy-like girl, bubbling over with fun and youthful exuberance. In a tribute to a collection of these letters in book form under the title *Goethe's Correspondence with a Child,* she writes "The correspondence is as popular here as in Germany." [1] Through the interest awakened by this book Margaret Fuller's attention was attracted to the correspondence between Bettine and her intimate friend, Günderode, a canoness in one of the Catholic orders, who, nevertheless, mixed freely with the outside world. This correspondence Margaret Fuller translated in part and published in 1842, under the title *Correspondence of Fräulein Günderode and Bettine von Arnim.* The remainder was translated by Mrs. Minna Wesselhoeft in 1860, after the death of Bettine von Arnim, and published in one volume with Margaret Fuller's part.

In describing the difference of character between

[1] *Dial,* Vol. II, No. I.

the two, Margaret Fuller writes: "I have been accustomed to distinguish the two as Nature and Ideal. Bettine, hovering from object to object, drawing new tides of vital energy from all, living freshly alike in man and tree, loving the breath of the damp earth as well as that of the flower which springs from it, bounding over the fences of society as easily as over the fences of the field, intoxicated with the apprehension of each new mystery, never hushed into silence by the highest, flying and singing like a bird, sobbing with the hopelessness of an infant, prophetic, yet astonished at the fulfillment of each prophesy, restless, fearless, clinging to love, yet unwearied in experiment, —is not this the pervasive vital force, cause of the effect which we call nature?

"And Günderode, in the soft dignity of each look and gesture, whose lightest word has the silvery spiritual clearness of an angel's lyre, harmonizing all objects into their true relations, drawing from every form of life its eternal meaning, checking, reproving, and clarifying all that was unworthy by her sadness at the possibility of its existence! Does she not meet the wild, fearless bursts of the friendly genius, to measure, to purify, to interpret, and thereby to elevate? As each

word of Bettine's calls to enjoy and behold, like a breath of mountain air, so each of Günderode's comes like a moon-beam to transfigure the landscape, to hush the wild beatings of the heart, and dissolve all the sultry vapors of day into the pure dew-drops of the solemn and sacred night." [1]

Speaking of the interests which these translations must awake, Margaret Fuller says: "A single page of Bettine's gives some notion of her fresh, fragrant and vigorous genius. But a character like Günderode's, of such subtle harmonies, and soft aerial grace, can only be descried through multiplied traits. She is a soul so delicately apparelled, a woman so tenderly transfigured, that the organs made use of to observe common mortals, seem to need refining in her own atmosphere, before they can clearly appreciate her . . .

"To those who have eyes to see, and hearts to understand the deep leadings of the two characters, these pages present a treasury of sweetest satisfactions, of lively suggestions;—to the obtuse, the vulgar, and the frivolous, they will seem sheer folly." [2]

Later, however, Margaret Fuller lost much of

[1] *Correspondence of Fräulein Günderode and Bettine von Arnim,* Introduction, p. ix.
[2] *Ibid.,* pp. vi ff.

her admiration for Bettine's character, as is shown by the following extract from one of her letters: "Günderode is the ideal; Bettine, nature; Günderode throws herself into the river because the world is all too narrow. Bettine lives, and follows out every freakish fancy, till the enchanting child degenerates into an eccentric and undignified old woman." [1]

Only a slight perusal of this translation by Margaret Fuller is necessary to see how successful the translator has been in keeping the vivacity and freshness of the one correspondent, and the peculiar charm and grace of the other intact. The easy conversational German style is translated into flowing colloquial English (or more properly American) idiom, with none of its native vigor or freshness lost.

Margaret Fuller translated a number of short poems from Goethe, and a few from other authors whom she liked, Schiller and Körner, especially. Those which she translated from Goethe express for the most part, his philosophical and religious views. They were found by me among a mass

[1] Higginson, *Margaret Fuller Ossoli,* p. 192; *Memoirs,* I. p. 248; Ibid., II. pp. 41, 140.

of Margaret Fuller's manuscript letters and papers which were deposited by Mr. T. W. Higginson in the Boston Public Library, and appear in print here for the first time. These poems with her complete *Credo,* published in the Appendix, shed more light upon her religious convictions than is evident from any of her works published heretofore, and are valuable perhaps only because they reveal very clearly the close relation between her religious thinking and that of Goethe.

EINS UND ALLES

Goethe.

Within the infinite its place to find,
How longeth forth the Individual Mind!
Chagrin and grief can there disturb no more;—
Forgetting all hot wishes, or wild Will,
Where sounds of daily duties may be still,
And thought, in freedom, float creation o'er.

Soul of the World! Come to pervade our souls.
For with the idea which all else controls,
To live, to do is ours;
Ye, sympathizing spirits! lead us on
To Him, the Master by whom all is done,
Who did, who doth create all other powers.

To aid in the great work, to recreate,
Lest matter, by resistance grown elate,

A stiff reaction take,
An ever-living impulse Man must be,
From shapes and colors of earth, and sky, and sea,
A second world must make.

Let all be breathing, acting, moving, living,
Forming, transforming, taking, giving.
Only apparent be one moment's pause.
The Eternal wills perpetual change in all,—
What would stand fast, must soon to nothing fall,
Such are our being's laws.

DAUER IM WECHSEL

Imitated from Goethe.

We were so deeply blest!
Oh stay, thou fair May-hour!
But the full blossom shower
Is scattered by the balmy West;—
Now I the tree enjoy,
Its freshness and its shade,—
Soon storms will be arrayed
Its beauty to destroy.

Hast thou fruit on thy tree?
Quick take it from the bough,—
That which has ripened now
Thine still may be;
A torrent's force today
Thy garden will assail.
Thou through this gentle vale
No more wilt take thy way.

But did all else stand fast,
Couldst thou remain the same,—
The rocks, the tower of fame
Are not as in times past
To thee. The lips are pale
Which once met thine in love,—
And from the cliffs above
She looks not on the vale.

That hand, so quick and mild
Each gentle deed to do,
That step, so light and wild,—
All this is vanished now!
While that which takes her place,
And is named by thy name,
Like waves which leave no trace,
Is hasting to the main.

Let the beginning with the end,
Harmonious linked in one,
In thoughts wide current blend,
Ere yet the whole be flown;
The objects pass,—but the behest
Of the immortal muse
Can charm this Idea to thy breast,
Which shall new forms produce.

Goethe's poem *Eins und Alles*, of which the first one of the two poems above is a translation, is one of the best commentaries of his religion that

we have. It must have appealed strongly to Margaret Fuller, for her translation is in a much more fervent tone than the original. How nearly the religious ideas contained in it coincided with her own religious belief is evident by comparing them with those in her *Credo.* Yet that Margaret Fuller did not catch the full meaning of this poem, nor of *Dauer im Wechsel,* is also evident.

According to Margaret Fuller's version of the first stanza of *Eins und Alles,* uniting with the Infinite means a forgetting, an obliteration of one's individuality, a state almost similar to that of the Buddhists' Nirvana; while the real meaning of Goethe is that the ego, which usually seeks its own self in pleasure, here, on the contrary, renounces and completely surrenders itself to the All, and in that way finds the fulfillment of its highest desires coupled with supreme pleasure.

Nor does her rendering of the second stanza convey Goethe's full meaning. While Margaret Fuller wants the soul of the World to pervade our souls, so that we should live and move with the world soul, or in other words, become its instruments, Goethe's idea is that we should become creative competitors of the World Soul. In this, our highest mission, we are aided, accord-

ing to Goethe, by invisible spirits, supreme masters, who guide and lead us to Him who created everything.

The second poem *Dauer im Wechsel,* which she calls only "an imitation from Goethe," is in a way a translation of a poem by Goethe of the same name. It interested Margaret Fuller probably for the same reason that the first one did. Most of the stanzas of this poem she has translated fairly well; but she missed the fundamental thought of the poem, which appears in the last four lines.

Goethe was from his youth up vexed by the continual change taking place in the phenomena of the exterior world, as well as of his inner life. Hence his passionate attempts to analyze these changing phenomena in order to discover, if possible, the lasting element behind them. Thus in the remarkable poem, *Die Freuden,* written during his Leipzig period, he analyzes the ever-changing colors of the dragon-fly in an attempt to get at the secret of its beauty, but, disappointed, ends with the painful outcry: "So geht es dir Zergliederer deiner Freuden." * A similar outcry of grief and disappointment over the fleeting nature

* "Thus it fares with you, dissector of your joys."

of love appears in the poem *Das Glück* of the same period:

"Was hilft es mir, dass ich geniesse?
Wie Träume fliehn die wärmsten Küsse,
Und alle Freude wie ein Kuss."*

In the poem *Dauer im Wechsel* we find the same analyzing of the phenomena of the exterior and inner world, but it is an analyzing which finally reaches the result for which Goethe had always searched and which he expressed in the lines:

"Danke, dass die Gunst der Musen
Unvergängliches verheisst:
Den Gehalt in deinem Busen
Und die Form in deinem Geist."**

The meaning clearly is, that it is the inner world that is imperishable, the world which the poet creates for himself and for us from the elements of bare reality. These four lines of verse Margaret Fuller translates: "The objects pass,—

* What good is it to me that I enjoy?
Like dreams the warmest kisses flee,
And all joy like a kiss."

** Be thankful that the favor of the Muses
Promises the imperishable:
The contents within your bosom
And form within your spirit.

but the behest, etc.," clearly drawing the conclusion, that in spite of all this change, the promises or behest of the immortal muse comforted or "charmed" us by the thought that new forms are produced to take the place of the old ones, which are gradually changing and passing away,—clearly an altogether different thought.

Margaret Fuller doubtless shows her limitations here and there in comprehending Goethe's full meaning; yet on the other hand, we are often astounded at her power of grasping Goethe's deepest thoughts. This is especially the case in her interpretation of *Prometheus* which she translated and sent to a friend, and which expresses the relation between man and the Infinite. The same may be said of the poem *The God-like,* partly translated by Margaret Fuller, in her first article on Goethe in the *Dial,* and republished in *Life Without and Life Within.*[1]

The other poems translated from Goethe, *The Consolers, Eagles and Doves,* and *Epilogue to the Tragedy of Essex,* all express a genuine depth of feeling, usually of grief. In the first two the heart is consoled by some happy thought or reflection in the end; but not in the last named. Here,

[1] *Life Without and Life Within,* pp. 18 f.

the queen (Elizabeth) desires to be left alone to give vent to her tears for Lord Essex, whom she loves, but whom she has had to condemn to die for treason.

The technique of the poems above is not uniform. By comparing the first, *Eins und Alles*, with the original we see that the lines are generally lengthened by a foot of two syllables. The poetic picture, too, is sometimes changed, and here and there some of the expressions seem forced. The meter, also, could be improved in some places. The second poem, *Dauer im Wechsel*, reads somewhat more smoothly; yet it falls far short of the beauty of the original. After a careful study and analysis of these two poems, one feels extremely doubtful as to whether Margaret Fuller ever intended them for publication at all. If she had, she doubtless would have polished them up considerably. What she probably did was to make a rapid translation of these and other poems that appealed to her most strongly in order to send them, as she did *Prometheus*, to some friend who may not have had such a ready command of German as she. In nearly every case, however, she remained true to the general thought and spirit of the original.

The poems which have been published are translated with more care and skill. Especially is this true of the last named, the *Epilogue to the Tragedy of Essex,* which is indeed well translated, artistic, and powerful. The poems, *The Consoler,* and *Eagles and Doves*, are also very well translated, and are very interesting when considered from the relation they bear to Margaret Fuller's inner life.

That which is, however, of most importance to us in these poems is not as to how skillfully and artistically they have been translated, but rather why they appealed to Margaret Fuller, in fact, became a part of her, and how she understood them and interpreted them to her friends. Only when judged from this standpoint, when considered as vehicles of thought, do they become important.

Of course, Goethe's works are mentioned again and again throughout her works. She uses illustrations, passages, and ideas from them continually, but so far as the interpretation of Goethe's characters and philosophical doctrines are concerned, they remain substantially the same with her throughout. If anything, their impression deepens and grows clearer to her as time

goes on. It is true Margaret Fuller was much indebted to Carlyle. She ordered his works for her library as soon as they were published, and read them with the greatest interest, often even making them the topic of discussion in her letters to Emerson. There is also a striking similarity between many of her deepest thoughts on the great German writers and those of Carlyle. Doubtless some of these thoughts and much of her inspiration for German had their origin in Carlyle's works. Yet we cannot but feel when we read her letters and criticism of Goethe's works that by far the larger portion of her deep feeling for the great German poet, and therefore the thoughts resulting from them, were inspired directly by Goethe's works, and were, in this respect, at first hand, and therefore original. That she maintained an independence of feeling is clear from the preceding pages on her study of German. More than this, she even differs from Carlyle quite often, and now and then even vigorously attacks some of his views. [1]

In judging her criticism and her interpretations of Goethe we see that they compare very favorably with the best criticisms of today—three-

[1] See for example, *Memoirs*, I. 262 f.

quarters of a century later. But only then can we do Margaret Fuller justice when we consider her time and place and compare her criticisms of these German writers with those of the best literary critics then in America, and see her vast superiority over them all,—only then can we appreciate what her influence and criticisms meant in the way of a proper understanding and appreciation of Goethe in America.

CONCLUSION

We have seen the powerful influence of Goethe upon Margaret Fuller; how, through an intense study of his life and works, she developed her inner life of thought and feeling, and ripened into the extraordinary personality which her contemporaries conceded her to be. We have seen how she accepted Goethe's religious and philosophical teachings almost in their entirety, though she did not relinquish certain Puritan convictions. While we found that she agreed with the Transcendentalists, inasmuch as she, as well as they, strove after a higher, freer, and nobler humanity, we also discovered how radically she differed from them in her fundamental religious and philosophical beliefs, and the methods by which she hoped to arrive at the goal at which they both aimed. There remains but a few words to be said concerning the influences she exerted for the study of German in America, hitherto not mentioned.

Margaret Fuller herself felt that, by the year 1846, her efforts to arouse a healthy interest for German had met with a considerable degree of

success, for she writes: "I feel with satisfaction that I have done a good deal to extend the influence of the great minds of Germany and Italy among my compatriots." [1] She had thus realized the sincere wish expressed a decade before, when she so earnestly desired to interpret, in some periodical, the German authors whose writings she liked best.[2]

Besides her efforts to stimulate an interest in German by means of her printed articles, she translated (1836-37) for Dr. William Ellery Channing, the apostle of the Unitarian church, and discussed with him the works of Herder and De Wette. The effect upon him must have been considerable, for we find a number of the thoughts of these German thinkers incorporated into the doctrines of the Unitarian church. In the schools where Margaret Fuller taught, her favorite subject was German. If we but look at the long list of German works which she read through with her classes we may judge what interest for German she must have inspired in her pupils. One of the most telling influences which she exerted for German, however, was through her "Conversations" in the cultured circles of Boston. Here, Mr. Clarke

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 168.
[2] Introd. to Papers on *Literature and Art*, p. vii.

says, she "dazzled all who knew her", and everybody who heard her, including Emerson, agreed that her power was most remarkable. She inspired in these meetings, "the *Spirit* which *giveth* life", according to one of the reporters of the "Conversations"; "she seemed a priestess of the youth . . . a companion". She was even called a "sibyl", a "prophetess", and Emerson says, she was sent to "announce a better day", and "had the power to inspire",——"the companion was made a thinker". [1] Margaret Fuller, herself, says: "All were in a glow." If we add to this what Mrs. Dall has written, namely, that thoughts and illustrations from Goethe were brought in continually, and that now and then Goethe was even made a subject for a whole evening's discussion, we see what an influence the "Conversations" must have had toward making Goethe better known and more widely read in America. Moreover, the whole glowing account of the "Conversations" shows that, consciously or unconsciously, Margaret Fuller followed out, in developing the inner lives of the members of her classes, precisely the suggestions which she found in the works of Goethe.

[1] *Memoirs*, I. 78; 349; 316; 311 f.

How far Margaret Fuller's influence went in the proper understanding and appreciation of Goethe in America we shall never be quite able to tell. This much we know, that all her associates, who, as we have seen, included the brightest and most original minds in New England, became, with few exceptions, diligent and enthusiastic students of German, and of Goethe especially. The German scholars connected with Harvard college in one way or another,—Charles Follen, George Ticknor, Edward Everett, F. H. Hedge, J. F. Clarke, and others—without doubt did much in arousing a lively interest in the study of German in America. Carlyle and Coleridge, from across the sea, had a powerful influence for Goethe and German studies in general, especially upon such men as Emerson and W. E. Channing. Yet after considering and weighing all these influences, and giving each of these scholars, writers, and teachers his just dues, there is still no doubt that one of the greatest factors in opening up for America "the rich gardens of German literature" —to use Rev. W. H. Channing's expression—was Margaret Fuller. How many of her countrymen enjoyed and relished the precious fruits they found there is shown by the zeal with which this whole

literary circle studied German, and by the demand that this growing interest soon created for German in the colleges. German has held its own in this country ever since, and the great names of German literature are known in every educated circle in America.

Though the tendency of all criticism of the present is to avoid, whenever possible, the superlative degree, yet it does not seem altogether unfitting, in passing an estimation upon Margaret Fuller's influence, to quote in conclusion a passage from James Freeman Clarke, who, of all her biographers, certainly knew her and understood her best. "Margaret was," he writes in the *Memoirs,* "to persons younger than herself, a Macaria and Natalia. She was wisdom and intellectual beauty. . . . To those of her own age, she was a sibyl and seer,—a prophetess, revealing the future, pointing the path, opening their eyes to the great aims only worthy of pursuit in life. To those older than herself she was like the Euphorion in Goethe's drama, child of Faust and Helen, —a wonderful union of exuberance and judgment, born of romantic fulness and classic limitations." [1]

[1] *Memoirs,* I. 97.

APPENDIX

MARGARET FULLER'S RELIGIOUS CREED

In the following pages is published for the first time Margaret Fuller's religious creed of 1842 in its complete form, just as it stands in her own handwriting among her other manuscripts donated to the Boston Public Library, by Mr. T. W. Higginson, one of Margaret Fuller's friends and biographers. The creed contained originally two and one half lines more, but these have been completely obliterated and blotted out with ink in the same manner as parts of many of her letters, presumably for the purpose of suppressing the contents. Those parts of the *Credo* which have been published before in Margaret Fuller's *Memoirs*,[1] are full of interpolations and omissions. Many of the words are changed and sometimes whole sentences are re-written in such a manner that the original thought is often very much obscured. The creed, as it stands complete, by no means presumes to be a comprehensive formulation of her entire religious and philosophical

[1] *Memoirs*, II. 88 ff.

belief, as any one will soon discover in reading her works. The following note by Margaret Fuller, which was sent to a friend with the *Credo* shows how she herself considered it. "Ever since —— told me how his feelings had changed towards Jesus, I have wished much to write some sort of a Credo, out of my present state, but have had no time till last night. I have not satisfied myself in the least, and have written very hastily, yet, though not full enough to be true, this statement is nowhere false to me." [1]

A Credo.

There is a spirit uncontainable and uncontained.— Within it all manifestation is contained, whether of good (accomplishment) or evil (obstruction). To itself its depths are unknown. By living it seeks to know itself, thus evolving plants, animals, men, suns, stars, angels, and, it is to be presumed an infinity of forms not yet visible in the horizon of this being who now writes.

Its modes of operation are twofold. First, as genius inspires genius, love love, angel-mother brings forth angel-child. This is the uninterrupted generation, or publication of spirit taking upon itself *congenial forms.* Second, conquering *obstruction,* finding the like in the unlike.

[1] *Memoirs,* II. 88.

This is a secondary generation, a new dynasty, as virtue for simplicity, faith for oneness, charity for pure love.

Then begins the genesis of man, as through his consciousness he attests the laws which regulated the divine genesis. The Father is justified in the Son.

The mind of man asks 'Why was this second development?—Why seeks the divine to exchange best for better, bliss for hope, domesticity for knowledge?' We reject the plan in the universe which the Spirit permitted as the condition of conscious life. We reject it in the childhood of the soul's life. The cry of infancy is why should we seek God when He is always there, why seek what is ours as soul's through indefinite pilgrimages, and burdensome cultures?

The intellect has no answer to this question, yet as we through faith and purity of deed enter into the nature of the Divine it is answered from our own experience. We understand, though we cannot explain the mystery of something gained where all already is.

God, we say, is Love. If we believe this we must trust Him. Whatever has been permitted by the law of being must be *for* good, and only *in time not good.* We do trust Him and are led forward by experience. Sight gives experience of outward life, faith of inward. We then discern, however faintly, the necessary harmony of the two lives. The moment we have broken through an obstruction, not accidentally, but by the aid of faith, we begin to realize why any was permitted. We begin to interpret the universe and deeper depths are opened with each soul that is convinced. For it would seem that

the Divine expressed His meaning to Himself more distinctly in man than in the other forms of our sphere, and through him uttered distinctly the Hallelujah which the other forms of nature only intimate.

Wherever man remains imbedded in nature, whether from sensuality or because he is not yet awakened to consciousness, the purpose of the whole remains unfulfilled, hence our displeasure when man is not in a sense *above* nature. Yet when he is not bound so closely with all other manifestations, as duly to express their spirit, we are also displeased. He must be at once the highest form of nature and conscious of the meaning she has been striving successively to unfold through those below him.

Centuries pass,—whole races of men are expended in the effort to produce one that shall realize this idea and publish spirit in the human form. But here and there there is a degree of success. Life enough is lived through a man to justify the great difficulties and obstructions attendant on the existence of mankind.

Then through all the realms of thought vibrates the affirmation 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased,' and many souls encouraged and instructed offer themselves to the baptism, whether of water, whether of fire.

I do not mean to lay an undue stress upon the position and office of man, merely because I am of his race, and understand best the scope of his destiny. The history of the earth, the motions of the heavenly bodies suggest already modes of being higher than his, and which fulfill more deeply this office of interpretation. But I do sup-

pose his life to be the rivet in one series of links in the great chain, and that all these higher existences are analogous to his. Music suggests them, and when carried on these strong wings through realms which on the ground we discern but dimly, we foresee how the next step in the soul's upward course shall interpret man to the universe as he now interprets those forms beneath himself; for there is ever evolving a consciousness of consciousness, and a soul of the soul. To know is to bring to light somewhat yet to be known. And as we elucidate the previous workings of spirit, we ourselves become a new material for its development.

Man is himself one tree in the garden of the spirit. From his trunk grow many branches, social contracts, art, literature, religion, etc. The trunk gives the history of the human race. It has grown up higher into the heavens, but its several acorns, though each expressed the all, did not ripen beyond certain contours and a certain size.

In the history of matter, however, laws have been more and more clearly discerned, and so in the history of spirit, many features of the *God-man* have put forth; several limbs, disengaged themselves. One is what men call revelation, different from other kinds only in being made through the acts and words of men. Its law is identical whether displaying itself as genius or piety, but its modes of expression are distinct dialects though of similar structure.

The way it is done is this. As the Oak desires to plant its acorns, so do souls become the fathers of souls. Some

do this through the body, others through the intellect. The first class are citizens; the second artists, philosophers, lawgivers, poets, saints,—All these are anointed, all Immanuel, all Messiah, so far as they are true to the law of their incorruptible existence; brutes and devils so far as they are subjected to that of their corruptible existence.

But yet further, as wherever there is a tendency, a form is gradually evolved as its type; as the rose represents the flower world and is its queen, as the lion and eagle compress within themselves the noblest that is expressed in the animal kingdom, as the telescope and microscope express the high and searching desires of man; and the organ and (———)* his completeness, so has each tribe of thoughts and lives its law upon it to produce a king, a form which shall stand before it a visible representation of the aim of its strivings. It gave laws with Confucius and Moses; it tried them with Brahma, it lived its life of eloquence in the Apollo, it wandered with Osiris. It lived one life as Plato, another as Michael Angelo, or Luther. It has made Gods, it has developed men. Seeking, making it produce ideals of the developments of which humanity is capable, and one of the highest, nay in some respects the very highest it has yet known was the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

I suppose few are so much believers in his history as myself. I believe (*in my own way*) in the long preparation of ages, and the truth of the prophecy. I see a necessity in the character of Jesus why Abraham should

* Word illegible.

be the founder of his nation, Moses its lawgiver, and David its king and poet. I believe in the genesis, as given in the Old Testament. I believe in the prophets, and that they foreknew, not only what their nation required, but what the development of universal man required, a Redeemer, an Atoner, one to make, at the due crisis, voluntarily the sacrifice Abraham would have made of the child of his old age, a lamb of God, taking away the sins of the world. I believe Jesus came when the time was ripe, that he was peculiarly a messenger and son of God. I have nothing to say in denial (of) the story of his birth. Whatever the true circumstances were *in time* he was born of a virgin, and the tale expresses a truth of the soul. I have no objection to the miracles, except where they do not happen to please me. Why should not a soul so consecrate and intent develop new laws and make matter plastic? I can imagine him walking the waves and raising the dead without any violation of my usual habits of thought. He would not remain in the tomb, they say, surely not; death is impossible to such a being. He remained upon earth and all who have met him since *on the way* have felt their souls burn within them. He ascended to Heaven, surely, it could not be otherwise.

But when I say to you, also, that though I think all this really happened, it is of no consequence to me whether it did or not, that the ideal truth such illustrations present to me, is enough, and that if the mind of St. John, for instance, had conceived the whole and offered it to us as a poem, to me, as far as I know, it would be just as

real. You see how wide the gulf that separates me from the Christian Church.

Yet you also see that I believe in the history of the Jewish nation and its denouement in Christ, as presenting one great type of spiritual existence. It is very dear to me and occupies a large portion of my thoughts. I have no trouble, so far from the sacrifice required of Abraham, for instance, striking me as it does Mr. Parker, I accept it as prefiguring a thought to be fully expressed by the death of Christ (yet forget not that they who passed their children through the fire to Moloch were pious also, and not more superstitious than an exclusive devotion to Christ has made many of his followers). Do you not place Christ then in a higher place than Socrates, for instance, or Michael Angelo? Yes! Because if his life was not truer, it was deeper, and he is a representative of the ages. But then I consider the Greek Apollo as one also!

Have men erred in following Christ as a leader? Perhaps rarely. So great a soul must make its mark for many centuries. Yet only when men are freed from him, and interpret him by the freedom of their own souls, open to visits of the Great Spirit from every side can he be known as he is.

'With your view do you not think He placed undue emphasis on his own position?'

In expression he did so, but this is not in my way either, I should like to treat of this separately in another letter.

Where he was human, not humanly-divine, and where men so received him, there was failure, and is mist and

sect,—but never where he brought them to the Father. But they knew not what they did with him then and do not now.

For myself, I believe in Christ because I can do without him; because the truth he announces I see elsewhere intimated; because it is foreshadowed in the very nature of my own being. But I do not wish to do without him. He is constantly aiding and answering me. Only I will not lay any undue and exclusive emphasis on him. When he comes to me I will receive him; when I feel inclined to go by myself, I will. I do not reject the church either. Let men who can with sincerity live in it. I would not—for I believe far more widely than any body of men I know. And as nowhere I worship less than in the places set apart for that purpose, I will not seem to do so. The blue sky seen above the opposite roof preaches better than any brother, because, at present, a freer, simpler medium of religion. When great souls arise again that dare to be entirely free, yet are humble, gentle, and patient, I will listen, if they wish to speak. But that time is not nigh; these I see around me, here and in Europe, are mostly weak and young.

Would I could myself say with some depth what I feel as to religion in my very soul. It would be a clear note of calm security. But for the present, I think you will see how it is with me as to Christ.

I am grateful here, as everywhere, where spirit bears fruit in fulness. It attests the justice of my desires; it kindles my faith; it rebukes my sloth; it enlightens my resolve. But so does the Apollo, and the beautiful infant,

and the summer's earliest rose. It is only one modification of the same harmony. Jesus breaks through the soil of the world's life, like some great river through the else inaccessible plains and valleys. I bless its course. I follow it. But it is a part of the All. There is nothing peculiar about it, but its form.

I will not loathe sects, persuasions, systems, though I cannot abide in them one moment. I see most men are still in need of them. To them their banners, their tents; let them be Platonists, Fire-worshippers, Christians; let them live in the shadow of the past revelations. But Oh Father of our souls, I seek thee. I seek thee in these forms; and in proportion as they reveal thee more, they lead me beyond themselves. I would learn from them all, looking to thee. I set no limits from the past to my soul or any soul. Countless ages may not produce another worthy to loose the shoes of Jesus of Nazareth; yet there will surely come another manifestation of that *Word* that was in the beginning. For it is not dead, but sleepeth; and if it lives, must declare itself.

All future manifestations will come, like this,—not to destroy the law and the prophets but to fulfill. But as an Abraham called for a Moses, a Moses for a David, so does Christ for another ideal.* . . .

We want a life more complete and various than that of Christ. We have had the Messiah to reconcile and teach, let us have another to live out all the symbolical forms of human life with the calm beauty and physical

* Two and one-half lines are blotted out and obliterated here, so as to make it totally illegible.

fulness of a Greek god, with the deep consciousness of a Moses, with the holy love and purity of Jesus. Amen! *Addenda.*

I have not shown with any distinctness how the very greatness of the manifestation in Jesus calls for a greater. But this as the extreme emphasis given by himself to his office, should be treated of separately in a letter or essay on *the processes of genius* in declaring itself.

I have not shown my deep feeling of his life as a genuine growth, so that his words are all living and they come exactly to memory with all the tone and gesture of the moment, true runes of a divine oracle. It is the same with Shakespeare and in a less degree with Dante.

I have not spoken of men clinging to him from the same weakness that makes them so dependent on a priesthood, or makes idols of the objects of affection. In him hearts seek the Friend; minds the Guide. But this is weakness in religion, as elsewhere. No prop will do. 'The soul must do its own immortal work', and books, lovers, friends, meditations fly from us only to return, when we can do without them. But when we can use and learn from them, yet feel able to do without them they will depart no more. If I were to preach on this subject I would take for a text the words of Jesus:

'*Nevertheless,* I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.'[1]

[1] Margaret Fuller MSS. in Boston Public Library. Summer of 1842.

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